



SIHRA NEWS

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HOSPITALITY MAGAZINE



FHRAI Golden Jubilee Convention: Bhubaneswar plays True Host

The Golden Jubilee Convention of Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) held between September 25 to 27 at the temple town of India, Bhubaneswar saw destination Odisha and its hotel industry pulling out all stops to make it an all round success. **P Krishna Kumar** sums up the three-day convention and deliberations..... Page No. 16



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Hospitality Biz is a monthly news & analysis magazine reporting on and for the Indian hospitality industry.

This magazine has a holistic focus and it streamlines news and analysis relevant to this industry in a crisp format. The magazine also has a combination of current news stories across each of the industry's verticals backed by analysis and perspective.

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South India Hotels & Restaurants Association

South India Hotels and Restaurants Association (SIHRA) is a 64 year old preeminent Trade Association for the Hospitality Industry in Southern India comprising the States of Telangana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. SIHRA constitutes the Southern Region of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI).

SIHRA has over 1100 Hotel & Restaurant Members comprising mostly of small, medium and other star categories of hotels & restaurants.

The main objective of SIHRA is to encourage, promote and protect the interest of its member establishments. It has been rendering professional advice and assistance from time to time to all its members on topics of vital importance.

SIHRA takes up the causes of its members with the various state governments as well as with other bodies and acts as the official spokesman for the Hospitality Industry. It also acts as advisory body to the state governments in south India towards formulating their respective tourism policies.

SIHRA regularly conducts professional development programmes and workshops to further enhance the existing professional knowledge and productivity skills of staff of member establishments to enable them to keep pace with the rapid developments in the hospitality industry worldwide.

SIHRA's Executive Committee consists of President of Honour, President, four Vice Presidents, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and thirteen Executive Committee Members. Except for the President of Honour, all other office bearers are elected annually. One-third retire by rotation and are eligible for re-election.

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President's Message

K SYAMA RAJU

Dear Members,

I would like to thank the members of South India Hotels & Restaurants Association (SIHRA) for re-electing me as your President for the year 2015-16. This exhibits your tremendous confidence in me as well as the team of office bearers to enable us to carry out the responsibilities of the Association. Through constant contact with all of you either through the E.C. Meetings held outside the metropolitan cities or through SIHRA News magazine, with your support and cooperation extended to the Association we were able to make the Association an official spokesperson of Hospitality industry.

As I mentioned in my speech at 64th AGM of SIHRA that despite the recession in Business Travel during last year, Group Tourism, Mice Tourism and Luxury Tourism helped the growth of Indian Tourism industry with improvement in service sectors. HVS international in their Annual Trend Report has mentioned nationwide increase in occupancies of over 60% last year with marginal growth in RevPAR. The recent global investors meet arranged by the Prime Minister of India has invoked confidence and faith in the international investors which hopefully will help in achieving the targeted growth by 2020. The new Tourism Policy along with the note to the cabinet on the demand of hotel industry to lower the cap of INR. 200 crores to become eligible for infrastructure status as well as removing certain clauses which bars certain benefits in hotel projects will be a breakthrough for the progress of hospitality industry and enable it to increase the room inventory. Central Government's determination to introduce GST (Goods & Services Tax) by the end of 2016 will also help the hospitality industry to get rid of plethora of taxes invoked by the centre and state Governments.

The Annual convention 2015 SIHRA held at Hyderabad was a grand success for which I am thankful to the members and office members.

The Conference on Promotion of Tamilnadu jointly organized by the Government of Tamil Nadu and FICCI was an eye opener to the investors on Tourism potential in Tamil Nadu. Your Association was represented by the Advisor who was Moderator on the session on State stakeholders meet which provided an opportunity to the audience to understand the opportunities and challenges before

the industry in Tamil Nadu.

The PATA Travel Mart held at Bengaluru gave an opportunity to the participants at the investor's forum to discuss changes needed for the improvement of Tourism. The forum discussed the need to review regulatory frameworks including Coastal Zone Regulations for better utilization of coastline for tourism.

I am happy to share the success of the Golden jubilee FHRAI convention at Bhubaneswar. The convention was marked by the presence of galaxy of central and state ministers, bureaucrats, etc. From southern region nearly 200 delegates had participated in the convention.

At SIHRA Secretariat, efforts are being done to upgrade DBM hardware-server, system on financial reports, on payment, membership details and service tax module. This will help our secretariat to provide correct data to members.

Regarding proposed Food Safety framework by FSSAI, the implementation of Act has been postponed to February 2016 to enable our members to make necessary improvement.

The new SIHRA office will become operational by the end of this year to provide more services to the members. SIHRA members can use all facilities in new office which is situated in Mount Road, Chennai.

Members are requested to provide more inputs to SIHRA through news contribution and relevant photos that will exhibit our presence to the public and various agencies.

Let me end this note by wishing all members and their families SEASONS GREETINGS and HAPPY DIWALI. ■

Thank you



K Syama Raju
President, SIHRA



Editor's Desk

P KRISHNA KUMAR

Bloom & Gloom!

After long years of hoopla and hullabaloo, it seems the travel and tourism industry has started getting its due from Indian states. There is definitely a late swing in favour of tourism from states across the country to identify and develop infrastructure based on their respective strengths. For avid industry watchers, it looks as if states are competing with each other virtually to draw policies with one-upmanship, for luring prospective investors. While 'single-window' clearance was in vogue for some time now, going a step further, some states have started talking about 'single desk' system. A change of attitude is palpable even in the bureaucracy, which for a long time considered matters of policy-making their fiefdom. There is a growing tendency in the government to take into confidence and involve the industry before framing policies that concern them, which to some extent is appreciable.

There is a lot to cheer about for industry stakeholders and their fraternal associations as things have started working to their benefit. After long years of lobbying and persuasions, the governments have started considering demands like licensing, taxation, financing, etc. Maharashtra has announced its decision to cut licences for the hospitality sector by 75%. Another key gateway city state, Delhi, has already set the ball rolling to ease licence raj in the sector in consultations with the stakeholders. States like Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, and Karnataka, all have come forward with pro-active policies to promote tourism by working in tandem with the private industry. Since policies have been framed, the need of the hour is proper implementation and following them in true spirit as drafted, and ensuring the ideas don't just remain on paper.

Amidst all these progressive talks, what continues to hold back Incredible India from gaining its height are the perception issues. If it was the global backlash in the wake of the infamous Nirbhaya sexual assault case that raised questions on safety and security a couple of years ago, today, it is a different set of issues that are taking a toll on India's global image. Incidents of heinous crimes perpetuated in the name of 'culture' by self-claimed guardians of Indian culture and civilization are not helping the cause of tourism and image of India, internationally. When food is an inevitable component of a traveller's destination experience, dictating what visitors to a country may eat and may not eat, would again be suicidal. Tourism is a major tool for cross cultural exchanges, therefore a skewed approach, especially from the State itself, could prove ignominious to say the least! ■

P Krishna Kumar

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Bharat Malkani takes over as President of FHRAI

Vivek Nair to stay as Hony Secretary

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of FHRAI held on September 30 in Delhi elected Bharat Malkani, Managing Director, Hotel Transit, Mumbai as the President of the Federation. Malkani, who was Vice President in the outgoing Executive Committee, succeeds TS Walia. While Walia will remain in the new committee as Vice President, Luv Malhotra, Jt. Managing Director, CHL Hotels and Syama Raju, Managing Director, Hotel Maurya, Bangalore will continue to hold the Vice Presidents post for another term.

Vivek Nair, Chairman & Managing Director, Hotel Leela Ventures has been re-elected as Hony. Secretary. Garish Oberoi and K Murali Rao are Joint Secretaries, and Sudesh Poddar, the Treasurer of the Federation. The AGM also nominated different committee members for the next one year. The legal committee of the Federation will be headed by Pradeep Shetty, while the Classification Committee will be headed by Nirav Gandhi. SM Shervani is the new Constitution Committee head.

Speaking to Hospitality Biz after taking



over the Presidentship, Malkani said that the priority before him is to “strategically define the next decade” as the organisation and its constitution has completed 50 years. “We understand the sense of changes happening all over and as an association we need to change and modernise ourselves and redefine our strategies towards our membership,” he said. While there are so many issues before the industry, Malkani said that the Federation will take up the hotel classification issue with the government as a priority. “We feel that the classification job should be given to the industry experts, which is the practice world over,” he said.

When asked about his approach in dealing with the government agencies, Malkani said

that effort would be to ask for positive and favourable policies to stimulate tourism growth at all levels, rather than asking for subsidies and concessions. Citing instances of positive legislations at various States in the country including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, etc., Malkani urged the Central government to extend its support to the tourism industry at the national level.

Malkani said that the federation will push for highest level of compliance by its members in safety, environment and hygiene. “We don’t want to fight with the agencies on these issues, rather we want to work closely with them and find solutions,” Malkani said. However, he objected to moves from different quarters to paint the industry ‘red’.

In order to improve engagement with the membership, Malkani plans to strengthen the digital presence of the Federation. He also expressed his intention to make FHRAI Hotel Institute at Greater Noida a centre for skilling. ■

MoT takes infra status cap issue to CCEA

Hotel Industry hopeful of positive breakthrough

As Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has pushed a cabinet note on the demand of the hotel industry on lowering the current minimum cap of INR 200 cr to become eligible for infrastructure status under the harmonized list, as well as removing certain clauses including the term ‘prospective’ which bars hotel projects which came up before 2013 notification from enjoying the benefits, the hotel industry is hopeful of a breakthrough on the vexed issue of infrastructure status sooner than later.

Union Tourism & Culture Minister, Dr Mahesh Sharma while addressing the hoteliers at the just concluded Golden Jubilee Convention of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) at

Bhubaneswar confirmed that his Ministry has approached the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) for resolution of the issue which could provide respite to a lot of investors.

Vinod Zutshi, Secretary – Tourism, Government of India also gave enough indications that the government has “seized of the infrastructure issue” and will be doing the “needful” soon.

The hotel industry is keen to get the clause ‘prospective’ in the 2013 notification according infrastructure status under the harmonized list for projects above INR 200 cr removed and made applicable with retrospective effect.

Speaking at the meeting, Vivek Nair, Chairman & Managing Director of the Leela



Group of Hotels appreciated the efforts of the Ministry and expressed the hope that the cabinet committee would take a favourable decision on the issue. Vast majority of hotels that had invested in expansion in the last 5 years, were facing a debt repayment problem and had either turned sick, were listed as NPAs or referred to the Asset Reconstruction Committee, he said. “Hotels are treated as ordinary borrowers and so don’t get the option of long term repayment. The maximum tenure is 8 years,” he rued. ■

Tourism Ministry to approach MoF on stalled tourism projects under PIDDC scheme

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India will take up the issues with Finance Ministry, related to the financing of tourism projects in States which were started with the Central Financial Assistance under the Product/Infrastructure Development for Destinations and Circuits (PIDDC) scheme earlier, and got stalled as the central government stopped releasing funds of late. A number of projects are being impacted adversely across states as the Central government has withdrawn financial support to schemes which are not falling in the ambit of schemes like HRIDAY, PRASAD, Swadesh Darshan, etc.

The recently held Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee for Tourism under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary had

discussed the issue in detail and directed the Tourism Ministry to approach the Finance Ministry in this regard. This was informed by Vinod Zutshi, Secretary-Tourism, and Government of India while addressing the WTTC India Initiative event in Delhi. He was reacting to the issue raised by UP Tourism Minister, Om Prakash Singh at the forum. The Tourism Secretary said that the attempt is to convince the government and find ways to complete those pending projects by including them in any of the current schemes or by launching a separate dedicated scheme.

He said that the department has taken up all burning issues associated with the industry at the Inter-Ministerial coordination committee and hopeful of positive decisions. He said that



the expansion of ETV scheme to more countries which are critical for India as a source market, issues related to infrastructure status for hotel industry, etc. were high on the agenda.

Earlier speaking to the media, Om Prakash Singh, Tourism Minister of UP said that almost 22 projects under PIDDC are stalled mid-way and waiting for central assistance in the State. "They have stopped releasing funds," he said. ■

AP Tourism to introduce 'single desk' system for Tourism-related project clearances

Plans Integrated packages for Tirupati for international tourists

Andhra Pradesh Tourism is planning to introduce a 'single desk' system to expedite project related clearances for aspiring investors in the tourism sector in the State. "The plan is to these clearances within 21 days through a single desk system," informed Neerabh Kumar Prasad, Principal Secretary – Tourism, Andhra Pradesh. Speaking on the sidelines of a WTTC-II event last week, Prasad said that the target is to attract INR 10,000 cr investment in the tourism sector in the next five years. The state has already finalised projects amounting to INR 800 cr, and another INR 3,000 cr worth of tourism related projects are in the pipeline.

"The government has identified three models of investments in the tourism sector," he informed. One is total private investment, where land, money, etc. are of the investor and the government will provide all kinds



NEERABH KUMAR PRASAD,
 PRINCIPAL SECRETARY-TOURISM, AP

of facilitations, incentives and subsidies enlisted in the State's Tourism policy document. In the second model, wherever government land is available for tourism development, the government will encourage private investors to partner with the State on PPP (Public Private Partnership) model of development on a revenue sharing basis. The third model, is government investment in terms of last mile connectivity and infrastructure creation like roads, water, electricity, etc. "We have taken a virtual policy decision to restrict our role to tourism infrastructure creation and facilitation. We

don't want to do what the private sector can do better," Prasad stated.

Commenting on the tourism promotions, Prasad said that the government will promote Tirupati and Amravati to the international market by creating "integrated packages". Tirupati is hugely popular in countries in Africa, US, Canada, he said. Similarly, Amravati, the proposed capital of Andhra Pradesh, has a lot of Buddhist heritage associated with it, he said. "Buddhist tourists are all international," he added.

When asked about mega tourism projects which the state wanted to develop with the central financial assistance, Prasad shared that the State has already received approval for the Backwater tourism project involving Kakinada – Konaseema region, and has appointed an international consultant to prepare a Master Plan. The State has also approached the Central Tourism department for financial assistance for Nellore-Pulicat Lake development and development of Amravati. ■

HVS annual trends report for 2014-15 observes subtle but evident recovery in Indian hotel industry

Nationwide occupancy crosses 60% mark since 2010; RevPAR shows marginal growth; Rates drop

Leading hotel consultancy firm, HVS, in their annual HVS 'Trends & Opportunities for India Hotels 2015' report has noted 'subtle' yet 'evident' recovery in branded hotel business in the country in 2014-15. Nation-wide occupancies have grown almost two percentage points in 2014-15 thus crossing the 60% mark for the first time in four years. As against 58.4% in 2013-14, the occupancy closed at 60.3%, marking second consecutive yearly growth. Similarly, there was a marginal growth in the nation-wide RevPAR in branded hotels in 2014-15. RevPAR performance of India's organised supply rose to INR 3,324 from the last year's INR 3,275. This is the first in four years where RevPAR has grown, the report notes.

In spite of the occupancy and RevPAR growth, the Average Room Rates (ARRs) in the hotel industry in India continued to slide giving the industry enough reasons to worry about. While last year the nationwide average was INR 5,611, it has dropped marginally by Rs 101 to close at INR 5,510 in 2014/15. The report attributes this trend to the negative approach of the branded operators to 'drop rates quickly' in a bid to influence customer loyalty. Analysing the trend further, the report notes that while established hotels had been able to



command higher average occupancies, rates, and RevPARs, it was the new hotels which struggled in all these performance parameters.

Nationwide occupancy for all branded hotels was 60.3% in 2014/15, whereas hotels that have existed since 2010/11 closed at 63.8% occupancy in the past year. Displaying a similar trend, hotels that have existed since 2011/12 achieved 62.9% occupancy last year. On the average rate front also, while India-wide average rate was Rs 5,510 in 2014/15, for hotels in existence since 2010/11, it was INR 5,827 and for those that have existed since 2011/12, it was INR 5,672.

As far as RevPAR growth trends are concerned, the growth has been achieved across each and every star category this past year, the report notes. All in all, as occupancies have risen and the decline in rates seems to have been more or less arrested, RevPAR numbers have shown signs of promise during the year 2014/15,

with the exception of NOIDA, New Delhi, Kolkata and Bengaluru. The highest year-on-year RevPAR growth was depicted by hotels in Hyderabad (9.3%). Mumbai (including Navi Mumbai) led the way in terms of occupancy (71.6%) as well as average rate (Rs 7,194), while NOIDA registered the lowest occupancy (48%) and Ahmedabad the lowest average rate (Rs 3,785) in 2014/15.

For the most part, most of the 13 cities which were considered for study, witnessed an increase in occupancy, with the exception of NOIDA, Kolkata and Agra. The highest growth in occupancy was registered by Hyderabad (9.1%), followed by Pune (8.4%). The average rates reveal a more diverse narrative, with six of the 13 cities reporting an increase or almost stable rates over the previous fiscal year, while the rest portray a moderate to considerable decline. Hotels in Goa improved their average rates by 3.5%, whereas the hotels in NOIDA saw a sharp decline of 8.4% in the past year.

As future supply tapers, future demand improves and recent entrants stabilise, the industry is likely to see further growth in the performance of the sector in the months and years ahead, the report says. ■

Tranquebar bags National Tourism Award

Tranquebar (Tharagambadi), a panchayat town in Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu, has bagged the National Tourism Award 2013-14 for the 'Best Civic Management of a Tourist Destination' at the recently held Award function in Delhi. Dr Kannan, Additional Chief Secretary, Tamil Nadu, and Har Sahay Meena, Commissioner-Secretary, Tamilnadu Tourism, received the award

from Hon'ble President, Pranab Mukherjee.

Tranquebar is known for its historic past as a Danish Colony with lot of remnants strewn across dating back to centuries. Tranquebar was vastly damaged during the 2004 Tsunami. ■



Kerala Tourism to hold trial run of sea plane services in non-fishing areas soon

In order to take the local fishermen community into confidence and build consensus on sea plane services among the stakeholding communities, Kerala Tourism will hold demonstrations and trial runs of sea plane in “non-fishing” areas of State’s backwaters. This was informed by Anil Kumar, Minister of Tourism, Kerala here in Delhi. “The sea plane has already arrived in Kerala couple of days back to start the trial runs,” the Minister said. The Minister was briefing the media after receiving the National Tourism Awards in Delhi.

Although there was a delay in commencing the sea plane operations in the State, the Minister said that the “government is not in a hurry”, since there were apprehensions among the fishermen community about its impact on their livelihood. “We had a series of discussions with the unions last month,” he said, and there was near consensus on

beginning the sea plane operations in areas where there is no fishing activity, the Minister said. To start with trial runs will commence at Kollam and Vattakayal area in Alappuzha, the Minister added.

Commenting on the recognition the State received at the National Tourism Awards 2013-14, the Minister said that it was a proud moment for Kerala tourism, as the efforts of the State government has been recognized once again at the national awards. The Tourism department had won awards for Excellence in Publishing Foreign Language, Best Tourism Film, Most Innovative Use of Information Technology and, for its success in Responsible Tourism Project. Kumar also appreciated the efforts of the private industry in the state for bringing accolades to the State. Best 4-star Hotel in the country was bagged by Vivanta by Taj Kumarakom, while Coconut Lagoon, Kumarakom was



presented with Best Heritage Classic Hotel award. The Best 3-star Hotel award was won by the Marari Beach, Mararikulam and the Best Bed & Breakfast unit award was presented to Coconut Creek Farm & Homestay, Kumarakom.

The Minister said that the State tourism has submitted plans for approval worth INR 400 cr with the central government under coastal circuit, pilgrim circuit, eco-tourism, and rural tourism. The Union Tourism Minister has announced a INR 100 cr package for a pilgrim circuit around Sri Padmanabha Swami Temple during his recent visit, the Minister said. ■

Telangana to release new Tourism Policy by New Year

Bathukamma Festival to be promoted domestically and overseas to lure tourists

The youngest state of India, Telangana, will release their Tourism Policy for the State by the New Year. According to B Venkatesham, Secretary-Tourism, Government of Telangana, the proposed policy will have innovative proposals to incentivize the investors to attract more private investments into the Tourism sector in the State. Venkatesham was speaking at the National curtain raiser of Bathukamma Festival, a highly popular national festival of Telangana, organized by PHD Chamber in Delhi.

Speaking to the media, the Tourism Secretary said that the State government is committed to improve the tourism infrastructure in the State to attract more tourists. Home stays will be promoted in a big way in the State, he said. Similarly, budget accommodation units under

the State Tourism department will be upgraded. Venkatesham said that the department will also ask the organized hotel industry to lower their rates and introduce all inclusive packages. “We might also look at declaring either year 2016 or 2017 as Visit Telangana Year,” he said.

Telangana is the real heart of India and the meeting point of North and South, he said. The state is endowed with panoramic nature, rich culture and heritage, and other attractions. Pilgrim spots associated with Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, and Islam are in the state. Venkatesham said that besides Hyderabad which is a city of international stature, the state would be promoting Warangal, Nagarjunasagar, Badrachalam, and Adilabad as key tourist spots in the State. “

When asked about the niche tourism products that the State wanted to highlight in the international market, the Tourism Secretary said that the State has unparalleled infrastructure in Medical Tourism, MICE Tourism, and Academic Tourism. Hyderabad is both a Medical Tourism and MICE Tourism hub of India, he said. Lot of people visit Hyderabad for superior medical treatments from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa.

Talking about Bathukamma Festival, he said that the festival is associated with the cultural identity of Telangana. It is the only festival which is celebrated exclusively by women folk. He said that the endeavour is to promote the festival on a global level as it celebrates six core elements such as women, girl child, flowers, water, nature, and festival. ■

Karnataka Tourism Minister hopes breakthrough in CRZ guidelines soon

RV Deshpande, Tourism Minister of Karnataka expressed the confidence that there will be favourable relaxation on Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms on the part of the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), Government of India soon. Karnataka like many other coastal states in India has been advocating relaxations in CRZ norms which would support infrastructure creation like hotels, resorts, etc. along the coastline so that destinations can leverage beach tourism potential.

Speaking at the inaugural of FHRAI golden jubilee conference in Bhubaneswar, Deshpande said that he had convinced the Union Minister



RV DESHPANDE,
Tourism Minister of Karnataka

of MoEF, Prakash Javdekar about the need to implement the MS Swaminathan committee recommendations on the CRZ so that India can leverage the potential of coastal and beach tourism like many other countries of the world. “The entire coastline of India can be transformed if norms are relaxed,” he said. However, he said that issues of environment and sustainability of destinations needed to be taken care of. Therefore, Karnataka has proposed only 44 of the over 90 beach locations

for tourism development.

Similarly, Deshpande also advocated more liberal policies to develop airstrips wherever possible to make destinations more accessible to travelers. “Airport cannot be built everywhere,” he added. Talking about various initiatives taken by the state to improve cleanliness at destinations as well as safety and security of travelers, Deshpande said that the government is encouraging corporate to adopt destinations. Similarly, Tourist Mitra police service will be started in identified 319 locations in the State. He said that powers of a constable will be entrusted to this sector specific force as well. ■

The Leela Goa acquired for INR 725 cr by MetTube Sdn Bhd

HLVL to retain management; Keenly pursuing asset-light strategy

The CMD of Hotel Leela Venture Ltd (HLVL), Vivek Nair, at a press conference today, announced the company’s decision to sell its 206-key hotel in Goa, The Leela Goa, on a slump sale basis for a lumpsum consideration of INR 725cr to Ceres Hotels Pvt Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of MetTube Sdn Bhd Malaysia, by way of a business transfer agreement(BTA). The acquisition is expected to occur by December 2015 (subject to certain conditions, regulatory approvals). HLVL will continue to manage and operate the Goa Hotel, pursuant to a Hotel and Operations Management agreement, and the Hotel will continue to be known as ‘The Leela Goa’.

Commenting on the development, Nair said, “This is the first step on our road map to pare down our debt and the first of our disinvestments. We have embarked on an ambitious



plan to follow an asset light strategy and plan to operate and manage more hotels.” Asked about speculation in the media about the sale of its Chennai property, Nair commented that HLVL was waiting for the Chennai market to stabilise and had not received the right valuation yet, adding that the Company may or may not sell their Chennai hotel. Nair underscored the fact that “the first choice of HLVL was to find a corporate-wide solution” to its debt repayment problem in the next few months to

a year, rather than disinvestment of individual properties.

The CMD was at pains to explain that the large majority of hotels that had invested in expansion in the last 5 years, were facing a debt repayment problem and had either turned sick, were listed as NPAs or referred to the Asset Reconstruction Committee. “Hotels are treated as ordinary borrowers and so don’t get the option of long term repayment. The maximum tenure is 8 years,” he rued. Although in 2013, as per a Ministry of Finance notification, Hotels with project cost of more than INR 200 crores each, in any place in India and any star rating were included in the Harmonized Master list of of Infrastructure SubSectors, the rider that ‘this would be applicable with ‘prospective’ effect and be available for eligible projects for a period of three years, left many hotels reeling. ■

CGH Earth plans to raise private equity to create experiential tourism circuits in South India

Also plans major expansion into Wellness hospitality

Kerala-based CGH Earth, which is known for their experiential nature and wellness resorts, is planning to expand their footprint to other Southern States like Karnataka and Tamilnadu and create a complete circuit to facilitate seamless accommodation facilities for tourists who want to enter South India from the Konkan coast of Goa and Chennai and proceed to Kerala. In order to realise this expansion, the Group is currently mulling raising capital through private equity. This was informed by Michael Dominic, Director, CGH Group. Dominic was in Delhi to receive the National Tourism Awards for their properties - Coconut Lagoon Kumarakom (Best Heritage Classic Hotel) and Marari Beach Resort (Best 3-star Hotel).

“Unlike in Kerala, we don’t have a complete circuit in other states in the South India. We have been doing developments with the support of smaller

bank loans so far. But to create larger infrastructure, we may require bigger capital investment. So, now we may look at raising capital through private equity to make the growth faster,” said Dominic. When asked about probable destinations, Dominic said that they might look at destinations like Madurai, Trichi, Tanjore, Rameshwaram, Nagercoil in Tamilnadu, and Belur, Hampi, and Halebidu in Karnataka. Beyond Kerala, the group currently has one property each in Chettinad Tamilnadu (Visalam); Gokarna in Karnataka (SwaSwara) and Karaikudi in Puducherry (Maison Perumal).

The group is also planning to foray into Wellness hospitality segment in a big way in coming years. They are keen to develop dedicated Wellness ‘hospitals’ with hi-end accommodation facilities. “Wellness tourism is a fast growing segment. We already have three wellness



resorts in Kalari Kovilakam, Kalari Rasayana, and SwaSwara. We want further expand into Wellness with focus on hi-end international wellness tourists as well as domestic market,” Dominic said. CGH has acquired an existing resort near Periyar in Thekkady which will be developed into a naturopathy and ayurvedic centre, he said. “Once we created a model, we will be able to replicate it quite fast in other places,” he said. ■

Brigade Hospitality Services rolls out ‘The Baking Company’

Bengaluru-based Brigade Hospitality Services Ltd (BHSL), a division of Brigade Group, announced the launch of The Baking Company (TBC) – a unique offering for the health-conscious and for those who have a penchant for sweets, savories and all things baked. Having been present on a smaller scale in various Brigade Group owned membership clubs around the city, TBC will now see itself as a stand-alone offering in a retail environment with its first outlet at the Orion Mall at Brigade Gateway.

The Baking Company (TBC) will offer fresh baked goodies that are made without the use of preservatives and will bring forth a myriad range of offerings



with a focus on freshness, quality and healthy bakes. The menu, apart from offering an eclectic mix of hot and cold beverages, will tantalize consumers with both eggless as well as gluten free product options. There will also be an entire range of breads, pastries, cookies, sandwiches, savories, and tarts.

The Baking Company will also offer catering options for office parties, birthday parties, kitty parties, baby

showers and potentially any event that requires healthy and appetizing snacks; be it a formal gathering or a social get-together.

“It is our endeavor to ensure that ‘The Baking Company’ gets identified for its unique offering of freshly baked, ‘right out of the oven’ products that do not have any added preservatives. Our focus will be to provide our customers with a wide range of products based on a Menu that has been engineered keeping customer preference in mind. We have also developed an exclusive range of items that should appeal to our young customers as well,” said Vineet Verma, Executive Director, Brigade Hospitality Services Limited. ■

IRCTC invites bids to set up Executive Lounges at 19 Railway Stations

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) of Indian Railways, has floated tenders for setting up its Executive Lounges at 19 railway stations across the country. To be designed in the lines of airport lounges, the railway lounges will offer similar services to rail passengers at an affordable rate.

The stations where the facility will come up are Jaipur, Vijayawada, Agra Cantt, New Delhi, Kathgodam, Patna, Sealdah, Howrah, Bhubaneswar, Vishakhapatnam, Ahmedabad, Puri, Nagpur, Madurai, Bengaluru, Ludhiana,

Amritsar, Lucknow and Gorakhpur stations. The tenders will be finalised in October, and the Executive Lounges are likely to become functional by January/February 2016.

The lounge will provide a string of airport-like facilities, including wash and change, Wi-Fi Internet, Live TV channels, music, buffet services, newspaper/bookstand, luggage racks, shoe shiner, train information system and concierge services for pre-departure and post-arrival assistance to passengers.

“The swanky executive lounges, which will be a state-of-the-art facilities, can help the train passengers recover from tiredness



during the journey. Also, waiting for a train will no longer be an ordeal,” said Dr. A K Manocha, Chairman and Managing Director, IRCTC.

The executive lounges at 30 more stations are likely to come up in a year’s time. Once operational, it will hugely change the profile of passenger amenities at these stations. The Railways will identify space at the stations, which will then be handed over to IRCTC for setting up the lounge. ■

AxisRooms to raise next batch of funding to strengthen product offerings

To foray into South East Asia market soon

Bengaluru-based hotel distribution company, AxisRooms, is keen to raise fresh batch of funding to strengthen their product offerings to the travel and hospitality industry customers. AxisRooms had raised a seed fund of US\$ 1million in September, 2013 and used it in scaling up its market penetration and enhancing product offerings. Ravi Taneja, Co-Founder & COO of AxisRooms said that the company is considering to inject \$5 to 6 million as fresh funding to further improve their product offerings. “We are primarily looking at introducing tools to support hotels not only to distribute their inventory efficiently, but also improve their yield management as well as manage their payments efficiently with the fresh funds,” he said. “We have already proved our worth in the Indian travel and hospitality eco-system. Now, the challenge is in scaling it up. The way we scaled up our operations in the last



RAVI TANEJA,
CO-FOUNDER & COO OF AXISROOMS

two years gives us immense confidence to achieve future targets,” Taneja added.

AxisRooms has evolved from a channel manager for hotels to a complete distribution partner over the years, said Taneja. The Hotel Exchange (HEX), a B2B market place introduced by AxisRooms, last November has been an instant hit with both hotels, suppliers of inventory, and buyers, the offline agents. In addition to offering a single platform for hotels and offline buyers to transact on, it also helped discovery of productive partners (buyers) for hotels and finalising contracts with them through the platform itself. This was a game-changer as far as hotel distribution technology was concerned,

Taneja informed.

The innovative technology has helped AxisRooms scale up their customer base rapidly in the country over the last two years. From a base of 220 signed up hotels couple of years ago, AxisRooms has grown more than 10 times and have about 3,000 hotel customers in India now. Because of the understanding the co-founders had about the Indian hotel industry, they were able to develop and deliver very robust and simple to use systems suited for the Indian industry. “People can use our systems with same ease with which they log in to their personal Gmail. 40% of the hotels signed up with us didn’t ask for a training,” Taneja said.

Having established good base in the Indian industry in the last couple of years, AxisRooms is also looking to expand their business into regional markets in South East Asia in coming years. According to Taneja, the company has in the final stages of signing partnership with around 200 hotels in Indonesia. “We are hopeful of going live in Indonesia in the next couple of months’ time,” he said. ■

Shangri-La opens in Bengaluru

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts opened their second hotel property in India in Bengaluru. Located 30 minutes from the international airport, Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru stands 19-storeys tall in a leafy blue ribbon suburb on Palace Road. The 397-room Shangri-La spread on nearly two acres of land between the central business district and residential suburb – will deliver a unique blend of the group's signature service of 'hospitality from the heart' and legendary Indian hospitality at one of Bengaluru's premier addresses overlooking Bangalore Palace and Cubbon Park.

Reminiscent of a bygone regal era, the nine-metre high lobby showcases nine impressive cylindrical chandeliers, each weighing about half a tonne, while imposing marble columns highlighted by wall sconces call attention to intricate Indian motifs. Other stylish hints in the public spaces include marble from Italy, Turkey and China; textiles originating from the United Kingdom and Asia, as well as a glass elevator to shuttle guests to the function areas. In the Lobby Lounge, a sandstone wall installation sourced from Rajasthan measures 4x9 metres and depicts a gold-stained palm leaf pattern.

"Shangri-La's expansion on the Indian subcontinent marks an exciting third quarter for the group. We are excited to reveal a new luxury landmark in Bengaluru that adds to our

international presence and will welcome our loyal and new guests for business or leisure," said President and CEO Greg Dogan.

Starting from 41 square metres, each room is accented by a tufted leather headboard and plush patterned carpeting. The hotel's 30 suites – awash in colours of gold, plum and green – range from 98 to 274 square metres, and include three Governor Suites and the palatial Shangri-La Suite.

Shang Palace, Shangri-La's signature Chinese restaurant, led by Chef Lin Lin Yang will be the place to entertain over Cantonese dim sum, barbeque specialities, the flavours of Sichuan, Beijing and north-east China, as well as regional vegetarian dishes. b Cafe, the all-day dining restaurant on the lobby level, features interactive kitchens preparing international and local fare for its buffet and an à la carte menu. Adjoining the restaurant is b Cafe Pastry – an enticing alcove for eat-in or take-away sweets and savories. Destined to be the most glamorous and distinctive bar on the top of Bengaluru is Hype, scheduled to open before year-end. Set against the city's backdrop on the hotel's rooftop, on level 19, a chic indoor and outdoor lounge offers plenty of space to indulge in world-class whiskeys or handcrafted cocktails by expert bartenders.

CHI, The Spa is a serene and luxurious retreat



in the sky. Adjacent to CHI, is the health club, facing the outdoor and kid's swimming pools. The 24-hour gym offers state-of-the-art equipment and time-deprived executives the option to work or hold conference calls during a training session – made possible through an Android interface system.

Spread over two levels are the hotel's function rooms. The Grand Ballroom, with its own pre-function area and a ceiling height of 9.5 metres, covers 739 square metres and is one of the largest meeting spaces in the city. The flora-inspired venue holds up to 900 guests for weddings and grand events, and is supported by five additional and versatile function rooms on level two.

"Our diverse portfolio of accommodation, dining destinations and meeting space means we are perfectly positioned to set new standards and provide an elite urban lifestyle for our guests from the community and all over the world," said Jens Corder, general manager of Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru. ■

Taj Falaknuma, Hyderabad, tops Best Palace Hotel in the World list of TripAdvisor

Taj Falaknuma, Hyderabad has been voted as number one Best Palace Hotels in the World 2015 category by TripAdvisor. Trip Advisor's highly coveted award is given to hospitality industry's best that have attained outstanding reviews from discerning travellers across the world.

After ten years of sensitive restoration the Taj presented this sixty room private palace to offer its guests a glimpse of the imperial lifestyle of the Nizams who governed the legendary city of Hyderabad. It is amongst the most

luxurious of all Baroque mansions in India. The interiors of the Taj Falaknuma Palace are a statement in royal opulence, replete in its large Venetian chandeliers, rare furniture, grand marble staircases, priceless statues and objects d'art and murals encased in ornate frames along with a Palace Library, which is a collector's envy and home to rare manuscripts and an acclaimed collections of books.

Celebrating this proud moment, Girish Sehgal, General Manager, Taj Falaknuma Palace said, "We are extremely proud to have been recognised by TripAdvisor.

It is our constant endeavour to offer unique and impeccable experiences to our guests. This award is really a testament to our staffs' efforts to accord world-class service, deeply rooted in India's rich tradition of hospitality delivered with warmth and sincerity to our guests. Taj Falaknuma Palace was also recently acknowledged by Conde Nast Traveller UK Readers' Travel Award for being amongst the world's best hotels and Travel + Leisure India & South Asia's India's Best Heritage Hotel Awards 2015." ■



64TH AGM REPOSES FAITH IN SIHRA LEADERSHIP

The 64th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of SIHRA was held on September 19, 2015 at the Wallajah Hall, Vivanta by Taj Connemara Chennai. The AGM was attended by over 30 members from all the Southern States representing affiliate hotel

and restaurant members.

As per the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013, the Association provided the facility of remote e-voting to the Members to enable them to cast their votes electronically. The Members could cast their

votes electronically from a place other than the venue of the AGM, through e-voting services provided by the CDSL platform. Arrangements were also made to enable members and proxies to cast their votes by ballot.

The following persons were elected to the Executive Committee at the AGM	
1	Mr K Murali Rao
2	Mr T Natarajan
3	Mr Subir Bhowmick
4	Mr Suresh Madhok
5	Mr M Chakravarthy
6	Mr K Nagaraju
7	Mr K Ravi



At the Executive Committee Meeting held after the Elections, the following office bearers were appointed:		
1.	Mr M P Purushothaman	President of Honor
2.	Mr K Syama Raju	President
3.	Mr T Natarajan	Hony Secretary
4.	Mr M Chakravarthy	Hony Treasurer
5.	Mr K Murali Rao	Vice President
6.	Mr Subir Bhowmick	Vice President
7.	Mr K Nagaraju	Vice President
8.	Mr K Suresh Pillai	Vice President



9	Mr Hari Arumugam	Member
10	Mr D Srinivasan	Member
11	Mr R Srinivasan	Member
12	Dr M Venkadasubbu	Member
13	Mr Balakrishna Reddy	Member
14	Mr DVS Somaraju	Member
15	Mr S Basavaraj	Member
16	Mr PG Venkataramana Babu	Member
17	Mr K Ravi	Member
18	Mr B D Prabhu Shankar	Member
19	Mr Suresh Madhok	Member
20	Mr. PCM Santhanam	Member
21	Mr R Prabakar	Special Invitee

K Syama Raju, President, SIHRA gave the details of the present hospitality scenario, implementation of tourism policy of the Government, PATA conference held in Bangalore, and on the SIHRA Annual Convention held in Hyderabad. ■

FHRAI Golden Jubilee Convention: Bhubaneswar plays True Host

The Golden Jubilee Convention of Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) held between September 25 to 27 at the temple town of India, Bhubaneswar saw destination Odisha and its hotel industry pulling out all stops to make it an all round success. P Krishna Kumar sums up the three-day convention and deliberations.....



Smaller cities are better hosts when it comes to larger events. They pull out all stops to make their guests happy. Bhubaneswar has proved it in no uncertain ways. The whole city wore a festive look with welcoming banners all around. From the airport to the city roundabouts to the vantage points in the city all painted green with 'Atiti Devo Bhubaneswar' bill boards of FHRAI. To my astonishment, the Mayfair Hotel staff was ready with a refreshing welcome drink at the arrival area of the Biju Patnaik International Airport when my flight from Delhi landed early morning. It was just the beginning of boundless hospitality for the next three days. There might be conflicting views as regards the quality of deliberations at the conference, but over 800 delegates would agree that

the hospitality, the care, and the overall experience was one of the best.

The convention was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik, in the presence of an array of central and state ministers. In his inaugural address, Patnaik said that tourism is a flagship sector for Odisha and the government will provide all possible support to promote and market Odisha as a preferred destination. The state has rich diversity in terms of nature, long coastline, green and dense forest, culture and heritage, art and architecture, to attract tourists, stressed the Chief Minister. Talking specifically on Buddhist heritage, Patnaik added that there is wider scope for tourism as well as research activities at the Buddhist sites in Odisha.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Mahesh

Sharma, Union Tourism and Culture Minister and Minister of State for Civil Aviation said that the government and the private industry have to work hand in hand to take the tourism growth story forward. Mentioning specifically issues related to safety and security of foreign tourists, Dr Sharma said that this responsibility cannot be left to the government alone. Talking on issues related to funding and infrastructure status, the Tourism Minister said that the issue is under the consideration of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs and they are hopeful of favourable decision on the minimum investment cap under the harmonised list of infrastructure.

In his address, Ashok Chandra Panda, Tourism Minister, Odisha said that the state has drawn a road map for tourism development and investment promotion. He cited that the Tourism Policy of 2013 and Industrial Policy of 2015 spell out clear guidelines for investment and the support and incentive system. He demanded support of the central department to improve air connectivity to the state and flights connecting Bhubaneswar to Varanasi, Kerala, Goa, etc.

Debi Prasad Mishra, Minister of Industries, School and Mass Education, Odisha spoke on the investor-friendly policies of the state. He said that incentives are set, based on the capacity of the project to create employment. Approvals have been made speedy. Clearances for green projects would not take more than 15 days in the state, he highlighted. A GIS platform has been

activated where prospective investor can get all the information on the land availability online, he asserted. "Even Tourism SEZ is possible in Odisha," he exclaimed.

T S Walia, President, FHRAI said that the industry is going through myriad challenges and the convention would deliberate on these issues and derive on possible solutions. He said that the decision to hold the convention outside metro cities was deliberate and would help in taking the benefits of tourism to smaller cities.

Dilip Ray, CMD, Mayfair Hotels and Chairman, Convention Organising Committee said that the convention would go a long way in exposing the innumerable opportunities for tourism in the East and North East of India.

RV Deshpande, Tourism Minister of Karnataka, Jual Oram, Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Minister of State (I/C) of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Vinod Zutshi, Secretary-Tourism, Government of India were present on the occasion.

Business sessions:

The business sessions at the golden jubilee convention was well attended. While some of the topics and the selec-

tion of panelists were excellent, few sessions didn't make any impact whatsoever. Although the first session of the convention – Atithi Devo Bhava- The legacy continues - had some 'star value' with the likes of Mahima Chaudhry, and Gulshan Grover and Victor Banerjee, the deliberations didn't evoke any response for mere lack of direction. An otherwise inconsequential session got an unwanted twist when Vivek Nair

questioned the remark one of the panelists that Indian hotels are exorbitantly costly compared to hotels overseas.

Skill Development in Hospitality Industry:

The second day's deliberations started with a lively presentation by Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Union Minister for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship. He spoke on the huge gap that exists in



the skilled manpower space despite the advancements that the country has made in education in the last six decades. Quoting a sample survey, Rudy said that while 96% educated Koreans, 80% of educated Germans, 46% Chinese are skilled and employable, for India it is mere 4.5%. Twelve years of schooling may not make one employable, but 12 weeks of training can make one employable, the Minister said. India would require three crore additional skilled people in the next five years, around five million in tourism and hospitality, the Minister said. He said that the government has set up 36 sector councils to achieve this mammoth target. "There is a

commitment to change things,” the Minister said.

Heart Talk turns Hard Talk:

The veteran journalist Prabhu Chawla’s face to face with equally senior and hardcore hospitality professional, Rakesh Sarna of Taj Group turned out to be an interesting dual. Chawla posed some hard questions which at times made Sarna uncomfortable. It’s a fact that hotel industry professionals are seldom exposed to such hard talk. Chawla started with a straight forward question whether Indian hotels require Foreign Trained imported managers with obvious focus on Sarna who spent more than three decades in the Hyatt Group. Saying that the ‘imported’ tag doesn’t fit him, Sarna said that India has to “resist the temptation” to imitate the West. Talking specifically on the Taj Group, which has a heritage of over a century in hospitality, Sarna said that miracles cannot happen in the group by bringing a foreign manager. Taj has become the “custodian of Indian hospitality” because of the hard work of 26,000 strong people who work day and night to uphold the brand ethos, he said.

Chawla tried to corner Sarna and

find out answers for the Group diluting its luxury hospitality branding by launching Vivanta, Gateway, Ginger, etc. “Have you lost confidence in the Taj brand?” Chawla asked. Sarna reacted firing a witty question back to Chawla. BMW launches different series of cars, that doesn’t mean the car manufacturer has lost their confidence in 7 series, Sarna said. He said that the biggest challenge before Indian hotel industry is poor infrastructure and shortage of skilled manpower.

Voice from the Top

Moderating the panel discussion on ‘Voice from the Top’, Mandeep Lamba, Managing Director-India (Hotels), JLL India said that lot of changes have come in the industry over the last couple of decades, and the industry has started proliferating beyond the metro cities. It is important that the industry to remain responsible in Tier II and III cities. Otherwise it will be driven out. Subin S Zongadwala, General Manager, ITC Maurya New Delhi said that hospitality has evolved from an art to a science too with advent of cutting edge technology. “Process driven operations are increasing important in the changed scenario,” he said.

To a question on the relevance of human touch with the advancement in technology, K Mohanachandran, Area Director and Zonal General Manager, Taj Krishna, Hyderabad said that human interface will remain forever in the hotel industry and what is paramount is how hotels deploy technology without impacting the human touch. “Technology will help in cutting wasteful expenses and will free up manpower in the process which can be utilized for delivering memorable experiences to guests,” he said.

“Technology should make life easier than complicated,” opined Prof David Foskett, Emeritus Professor, and University of West London.

Social Media & Technology: Influence on Hospitality Business

The session on social media and influence on hospitality business had a nice mix of speakers and therefore evoked good response from the delegates as well. The session was moderated by Ronald Scott, an industry expert from the UK. Participating in the discussion, Ritesh Agarwal, CEO, Oyo Rooms said that social media is a big enabler for smaller hotels to compete with bigger brands. The millennial traveler





Iconic Developments: Is it Lack of Government Support or Absence of Entrepreneurship

The session pondered reasons for India not able to attract massive investments and iconic developments in the tourism sector to generate interests for people to travel. The examples of Sentosa island, Genting, Marina Bay Sands internationally, and how they transformed destinations have been discussed. Moderating the session, BM Gupta, Senior General Manager, Tourism Finance Corporation of India (TFCI) said that the Corporation has suggested to the government to plan some iconic tourism projects with funding from international agen-

doesn't care about the heritage of the brands, he said. Agreeing to the comment, Binu Mathews, CEO, IDS Next Business solutions said that there has been a large shift in the customer base of hotels 10 years back and now. The millennial traveler follows the peer recommendation rather than brand reputation, he said.

It is important for all businesses to have a digital strategy, opined Farhana Haque, Head – Machine to Machine, Vodafone. "Social media generates lot of unstructured data. It is significant how businesses analyse those data and evolve the right strategies," observed Upendra Jit Singh, CMD, Webel.

Technology is not a threat to businesses, said Mike Kistner, CEO, RezN-ext. Hotels should consider it as an opportunity. As far as social media platforms are concerned, Kistner said that, they are here to stay. If businesses are not able to embrace it, they will be falling behind, he said.

Social media gives a lot of exposure to businesses if leveraged properly, said Nikhil Ganju, Country Manager, TripAdvisor. However, questions were raised by the delegates why "good reviews" don't last long on TripAdvisor platform while bad reviews always pop up.





cies way back in 1996. He said that the government has to create land banks and provide infrastructure like roads, electricity, water, sewage, etc. to attract investors to such projects. Ashley Monteiro, Managing Director, Pathfinders Travel Group from Bangkok citing examples of Singapore, Malaysia, Macao, etc. said that they are living examples of how iconic destinations could open up opportunities for tourism growth. Marina Bay Sands Singapore delivers 0.8% of the GDP of Singapore, he said. He also tried to draw parallels between Macao and Goa, two destinations with similar heritage. Chender Baljee, Chairman & Managing Director of Royal Orchid Hotels explained how Singapore quickly responded with Marina Bay Sands integrated development to win back tourists which the destination was losing to Macao. From casino to cabaret to discotheque, everything is considered taboo here, he said. Subhash Goyal, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) urged for an integrated approach in tourism to attract tourists. He also took potshots at the “hyprocratic” attitude of Indians which makes advancements impossible for Incredible India as an inbound destination.

Online Portals- Boon or Bane?

The session moderated by Bharat Malkani, had experts like Avijit Arya, Founder of InternetMogul, Harish Chandra, General Manager-IT of Sarovar Hotels & Resorts and Siddharth Goenka, Executive Director of Octave Hotel in the panel. Chandra said that distribution involves technology and online travel companies understand technology better than the hoteliers, and thus cannot be ignored. Arya observed that while OTAs relevance in terms of its large reach is something that hotels cannot ignore, the hotels should learn to convert the guests coming through OTAs as their own for future businesses. Goenka brought

the issue of “manipulation of rates” by OTAs in the guise of “rate parity”. “Lot of small independent hotels suffer because of this manipulation,” he said.

Talking about the importance of digital marketing, Arya rued that while hotels invest in rooms, kitchens, chefs, GMs, etc., they try to cut corners when it comes to employing professionals with digital marketing expertise. “It is high time hotels invested in digital assets so that they can acquire guests from other channels,” he said.

Destination Odisha takes the centre stage:

Odisha Tourism spared no efforts to take full mileage out of the three-day conference. The officialdom and the stakeholders of the industry worked day and night to make the event an all out success. They also presented innumerable opportunities for tourism investments in the state and the investor friendly policies guaranteed under the Industrial Policy Resolution 2015.

The networking dinners were a cultural feast in itself. What stood out in the three-day convention was the grand parade to celebrate the World Tourism Day. The parade eloquently showcased the cultural vibrancy of the state and its social life.

HRAEI gifts 360-degree map of Odisha to State Tourism:

Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI), the host region of the Golden Jubilee Convention, gifted a 360-degree map of Odisha to State Tourism marking the annual convention. The map was unveiled by State Tourism Minister, Ashok Chandra Panda at the arrival area of Biju Patnaik International Airport at Bhubaneswar. ■





Design of hotels is a specialized field indeed, and often needs the active involvement of many stakeholders - be it owners, architects and interior designers, hotel management companies, consultants, procurement companies and logistic companies. The process involves getting all decision makers and beneficiaries on the same page, with the ultimate user, the guest, in mind, while being mindful of the return on investment, finds **Odelle Amaral D'Silva**

Hotel Interiors: DESIGN CONSTRAINED

Most hotels are landmarks of the city or region they inhabit, many of them iconic. They make their presence felt in their environment and they're there to stay for a while. At the same time they need to stay relevant and in vogue, in tune with capricious tastes of guests, and a society tripping over itself to keep pace with technology, for they are also called to be witnesses of the life and times of a place and a people.

Do hotels follow design trends ?

Those in the know say, yes - Trends and fads do emerge in interiors in general and get applied into hospitality too. The design and development of around 80 per cent of products and projects is driven out of the necessity to live up to the trends and standards existing in the market, say designers. Design trends could pertain to materials - for example, a trend of using glass in place of walls for guest rooms and bathrooms,

use of contemporary furniture, a 'whirling white' (all white) colour scheme is also fashionable, although only a few hotels would use it due to maintenance issues. Trends could pertain to profile of guests and more importantly today, technology. However, there is definite scope for customization of individual projects and not all hotel interior designers would necessarily follow these trends, is the general opinion. Following design trends is subjective to operator, location, star category, and owner's perception among, other factors.

What's driving trends? Guest Profile, New Materials, Technology

To understand trends it is necessary to understand the various classes of patrons that are driving the business of hotels, and consequently trends. Ar. Prem Nath has been practising for more than 45-years, his firm Prem Nath and Associates, a



complete design organization, having professional practice all over India, is involved with various Hotel & Hospitality projects, the landmark revolving restaurant at Hotel Ambassador, Mumbai - one of the first in our country, being an example.

Presenting a deeper analysis, Prem Nath talks about the profile of guests as a factor in design trends. These would include a) A class of new



RITU BHATIA KLER
Managing Director
Total Integrated Design
(India) Pvt Ltd



AR. PREM NATH
Founder, Principal Architect Prem
Nath & Associates



ANAND CHATTERJEE,
General Manger, Planet Hollywood
Beach Resort Goa



AR. BOBBY MUKHERJI
Principal Architect, Bobby Mukherji
& Associates



SAEID HEIDARI
General Manger, JW Marriott Sahar
Mumbai



GANESH BABU
Director, IDE Consultancy



MANISHA SHARMA
Director Rooms, Courtyard by
Marriott, Gurgaon



SHIVANI GOUR
Principal Designer,
KGD Architecture

PLAYING 'MONOPOLY'

When lay people see a plethora of hotels coming up in a slow market they wonder what sense it makes. The truth is that the world over, Hotels are owned by Real Estate barons. They are long term investors and are not looking for profits in the next five years. Rather, they focus on building a reputation in the market for at least 10 years. Also, if the property value is 'x', in 5 years the value will double and further so, in 10 years. By building on the land and adding a hotel, they are adding value to the property which increases its value by two to three times (Remember the Monopoly game?) These investors are able to get a loan of upto 75 per cent and repay it in those 10 years. So, when one talks about ROI for such owners, the property they got for 100 crores is already worth 250 crores. The day to day ROI is not something that they are so concerned about.

- Sourced from Prem Nath & Associates, Certified Valuers and Real Estate Appraisers and Advisors for Real-Estate Investments

generation, young entrepreneurs, 25 years or so, young turks with job opportunities in IT, Sales and Marketing, who travel frequently and are populating hotels b) The growing business class that are travelling to developing new markets for their enterprises and patronize hotels c) In small towns, an emerging richer class - nouveau riche, who now frequent hotels, d) The Generation Y, that are 'entertainment seekers' and make optimum use of the internet and mobile apps, who make travel and stay bookings by the click of a button and demand the latest technology offerings.

These business travellers have tariffs available to them via the net and mobile, something hotels never disclosed, earlier. They go for short business meetings and have no time, therefore the

whole concept of online check-ins and e-bookings, and pre-bookings where you check in and your baggage follows.

The trend then, is towards interactive screens and tablets to pre-book everything, from your room to your dinner to a massage at the spa. So both rooms and lobbies will sport interactive screens and tablets as part of their design with the menu of hotel facilities available on it. Nobody has the time or patience to stand in queues and it is no longer required. So while the lobby is still the face of the hotel, it is becoming much more functional. And by virtue of its new functions, lobbies are being designed to be smaller, but 'smarter'. "If you notice the older traditional hotel lobbies, only about fifty percent of the space is utilized,"

points out Ar. Prem Nath.

Shivani Gour, Principal designer and Senior Associate, KGD Architecture, expresses it succinctly as "a dipping down in human interaction while the technological interface increases by the day." Young travellers, she says are opting for solutions that facilitate a more independent functioning in spaces - this diminishes the importance of features like large reception desks, physical assistance to guests etc. Automated and efficient experiences are beating the age old practices in this industry, while the Indian market slowly but gradually catches-up on these trends.

Trends, say designers, also emerge out of the research that hotel brands do from a guest comfort point of view and therefore operating items like better mattresses, pillows, ergonomic comforts emerge from that. Some trends are driven by material availability. Ritu Bhatia Kler of Total Integrated Design (India) Pvt Ltd cites examples to illustrate this. "When the concept of sandwich glass was available, we used it in different ways in restaurant or public space. When digital printing just started to be available, we used the concept to create restaurant tables of glass with digital print images of flowers below it, at the Taj coffee shop, Vishakapatnam. Today, you can digital print onto most materials which gives designers options to play with. Therefore it is becoming a trend. We have created wallpapers

with designs of our choice for Eastin hotel Guest Rooms.

What is also driving trends is the fact that the Indian market is fast adapting to International standards, as more and more travellers are looking for similarity. The factor of familiarity is gaining credence over national borders, surpassing cultural differences.

Purpose of hotel, decides design

There is also the more obvious view that the most important factor that should ideally dictate a hotel's design is its "raison d'être" – the purpose; what market, region or guests the hotel is going to cater to. "The design, elements, materials it is going to use must suit the requirements of the hotel's existence," points out the General Manager, Anand Chatterjee, of Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa, which incidentally holds the exclusive franchise for the Planet Hollywood Hotel in L.A.

"There are a few elements in terms of services (MEP+IT+Security and Safety) and construction which are universal and depend on local and global laws. For example, we have used a lot of laterite for structural construction wherever possible at Planet Hollywood Beach Resort, Goa. We have used terracotta tiles, colour scheme which reflect the local purpose and branding of the hotel to reflect the high energy lively atmosphere. Planet Hollywood Beach Resort is the most distinct hotel at this moment in Goa in terms of its 'look and feel' he opines.

That the design is mostly defined by the USP of the brand, not necessarily by trends, is something that Manisha Sharma, Room Director, Courtyard by Marriott, Gurgaon agrees with. "We reflect this and talk about this too," she says. "Marriott has a lot of brands, of which Courtyard by Marriott is the 'refreshing' brand of the Marriott, something which is reflected in the design too. The hotel has a straight line, 'clutter-free' theme." The hotel lobby and guest rooms are designed as a reflection of space, says Sharma, with no cornices and coverings. She points out that while in their luxury brand JW Marriott you would find more of embroidery detail and certain luxurious fabric notes, Courtyard, being a business brand, its interiors are defined by simpler user-friendly accessories and fabrics.

Saeid Heidari, General Manager, JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, corroborates this view saying,

"We, at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar believe in high design elements and there is no way on compromising on the design and architecture which help us create an ambience for our guests. The entire design structure allows for natural daylight to filter through adding to the subtle yet grandeur feel of the hotel." Heidari adds, "In a city like Mumbai where we believe space is real luxury, we have managed to provide the guest with space and intimate spaces for meetings and relaxation. All in all the major factors that influence design in today's day and age in the hospitality sector are customer convenience, to provide guests with spacious interiors, ethnic designs with a western touch," he emphasises.

Many are of the opinion however, that what is more relevant in today's scenario are the trends related and dictated by the business of hospitality and 'revenue linked' decisions.

- Lobby Reception counters are doubling up as all purpose counters i.e. cashiers/information/business facilities. (Internationally the receptionist also mans a small café counter).
- Lobby seating is minimal, except in large 5 star deluxe or resorts where you may have lobby seating spaces.
- F&B spaces are open, inviting to guests and merging one into other.
- Business Centres are passé as wifi is prevalent and most functions are paperless. If a guest needs to print it can be done at the reception/front office.
- Reduced walls in rooms are the trend too.

"I can save 5 to 7 ft area by replacing this with toughened glass," says Ar Prem Nath. Glass separations offers the guest more space, light and scenic views of the outside at all times."

- Guest Rooms design – bathrooms getting more attention than the rooms at times ; Four to five fixtures in 5 star category. In budget hotels bathroom sizes are smaller but glass is still used to create feeling of space and bring in more light.
- Use of different glass - ceramic printed glass, acid treated glass, PVB laminated interlayer glass, glass with photovoltaic technology, glass with LED interface, etc are in use

Designers are walking the tightrope

The Tourism industry of which hospitality forms a part is a reflection of a general economic trend of the country or world economy in a direct exponential function. The market outlook definitely impacts design, and designers are indeed walking the tightrope, of late. For the past few years the hotel industry has been in a down-cycle. It is only recently that some hoteliers have expressed a cautious optimism about the market scenario. Average Room Rates (ARR) have gone down by almost 50 per cent, admit hoteliers. So, rooms that were earning hoteliers USD 300 to 600 per night are now available for 150 to 200 dollars. In these conditions, how are hoteliers and operators reviewing their design decisions and spend, considering return on investment, one asked.



“There has definitely been a significant budget drop from hotels for design across each and every space within hotels. Nearly half of the hotel projects are in cold storage and half are working at lower costs. Hotels say, “this is our budget and you need to work within it,” says Ar. Bobby Mukherji, Principal Architect, Bobby Mukherji & Associates. “We are working at 60 per cent of the budget that we used to work for, for the same category and brand of hotel. So designers are under a lot of pressure to wrack their brains to achieve the luxurious look to satisfy the brand’s image,” Mukherji says. “We do understand that hotels are not raking in the same return on investment as before. The only way ROI can increase is by lowering investment.” he laments.

To face this challenge of keeping a check on costs, designers have had to use different creative strategies. Firstly, designers are reducing their import component in material procurement. Earlier imported material, from Europe especially, made up a larger share of procurement. “Yes, we have reduced imports from Europe and USA. Today even importing from Thailand is prohibitive, with the depreciation of the rupee. We import from Thailand only that which is essential, for example, show Kitchen details not available in India, admits Mukherji.”

Yes says Kler, emphatically, “The impact is Cost , cost , cost ! How to design and deliver more in an optimum cost. How to save on future operating cost. How to make the design relevant in years to come to save on renovating cost. Most important, is that to achieve this, requires the right process and planning of the project from day one with all role players working towards same direction.”

Others like Ganesh Babu, Director, IDE Consultants, point out that how much market conditions impact the interiors of a hotel would be a part of the hotels management’s approach on budgeting, entering into an association with a brand, planning on a luxury hotel versus a boutique hotel and many other such factors. Babu emphasizes the fact that “quality and style are elements that hotels cannot overlook. This is where the consultants and feasibility studies for a particular project comes in,” he says.

That there has definitely been a significant budget drop from hotels for design, across spaces within hotels is evident from the responses of

architect and designers . The reality is that 5 star deluxe brands are now working on 3 and 4 star budgets.

“Hotels are sure to take time in getting the expected ROI, overspending is not encouraged, but that doesn’t mean we need to reconsider the investment being made on the design.” says Babu. Various innovative measures, including “opting for sustainable energy models, vitally planning material procurement, optimizing space utilization through multifunctional spaces, reworking the proximity of functions for cutting down circulation and operational costs” are being reviewed, Shivani Gour, Principal Designer at KGD Architects, informs us. However she stresses that though these measures are serving the purpose, what the Indian industry also needs to focus on is the development of varied niche clients who have more specialized needs like, health conscious travellers (attracted by Ayurveda and Yoga), Culturally conscious traveller (travelling for unique cultural experiences), medical travellers etc. “Catering to a niche can open up more windows,” Gour points out.

ROI, long or short term, that’s the question

The market outlook definitely impacts design as well as renovation decisions. So many hotels had postponed renovations from the leaner months, for execution when numbers turned positive. ROI is definitely a deciding factor, they say. However, there is definitely a more positive outlook now. “For the period ending August-September, our occupancy forecast is looking much healthier, based on daily trends, reservation team data. Occupancy is between 70 to 80 per cent and ADR has moved from INR 6,500 to 7,000. Yes, the market is showing cautious optimism, not just Marriott or Courtyard by Marriott, but across hotels,” says Manisha Sharma.

But there is also the view that the ARR is not necessarily the determining factor as the rates are becoming much more dynamic. “RevPar or Revenue per square feet area is a better tool to calculate the ROI,” opines Chatterjee. Hotels are long term investment tools and many like Heidari, for example, feel that hotel interiors and architecture is a long term investment, with customers being the biggest assets. As a thumb-rule, interior design and development takes about 11 per cent to 15 per cent cost allocation

of the total cost, say hoteliers.

To conclude, it is essential to critically monitor the investments in the current scenario, although completely feasible to do so. What is of significance is to check the sector in which the investments are made. For example, investing in upgrading the technological standards, or enhancing the operational efficiency of a facility can promise more returns. On the other hand, investing in aesthetic/ visual improvements might not necessarily ensure returns. On the whole, the travel industry is among the largest and fastest-growing industries, hence making investments here makes all the sense.

The interior design creates the first impression, in the minds of the customers. But, a lasting impression is created if the interior design blends with the workability of that hotel, IDE’s director, Ganesh Babu explains. This is primarily the reason why we might like staying at one hotel and not the other, though they are at par with their design in general. ■



Amaryllis

A lovely new homestay in Wayanad, Kerala

Amaryllis, a lovely new homestay commenced its operations in Wayanad, Kerala. Set amidst the serenity and timeless beauty of Wayanad's famed mist shrouded mountains, looking down on the Karapuzha Reservoir with the Western Ghats in the background, the views from this property are truly spectacular. Amaryllis is a dream come true for its owners, Victor and Ranjini Dey who have built this property ground up, over the last few years.

Only six hours from the busy city of Bangalore, three hours from Mysore and two hours from Calicut, Amaryllis is the perfect getaway for a relaxing and peaceful stay in the lap of virgin nature. The beautiful flower Amaryllis inspires its name and logo. This stunning red flower

was the first one that was planted on either side of the driveway. All four rooms and two luxury Tree Villas are named after flowers that grow on the property.

Commenting on the opening, Victor and Ranjini Dey, said, "In 2008, we bought the property and started to transform what was an abandoned coffee and rubber plantation. We traced roads, dug wells, landscaped the area and planted a variety of new crops. Ideas poured in, from friends, family and guests who had stayed with us earlier. After five years of hard work, our home Amaryllis is now ready to welcome you."

"As in the case of our previous residence "Tranquil", we decided to share our home with like-minded folk. Guests who were looking at a

few days of peace and quiet in pristine natural surroundings, and who would like to enjoy the old world charm and luxury of a planter's home – leisurely breakfasts, lazing around the pool, sleepy afternoons, tea on the verandah, evenings under the stars, followed by dinner. All this with an unmatched view! "

Luxury redefined:

The Terrace Suite (Camellia) is a super luxurious and elegant 'room with a view.' This exceptionally generous room of over 700 sq ft has polished wood floors that accentuate the white cedar furniture. The large glass doors open up onto a spacious verandah, from where the views of the lush countryside below are unmatched. This is the perfect place to stretch out on the chaise





lounge and enjoy the breathtaking view of the meandering waters of the Karapuzha Reservoir, with the Velaranmalai Hills beyond.

The two Tree Villas each with their special characteristics provide a different experience. The top Tree Villa (Solandra) is built at a majestic height of 35 feet. A few steps away from the main bungalow, this all wood tree villa is inspiring and exciting at the same time. The bottom Tree Villa (Poinsettia) is located at the lower end of the estate a few minutes' walk from the main bungalow. Access to the tree villa is through an easy and short stairway and is at a height of 25 feet on the North face. With walls of bamboo and a wooden floor, it is a luxury tree villa that includes a wide verandah and spacious bathroom, with the same panoramic views.

A gentle walk past the swimming pool leads guests to the other side of the property, where the well appointed Annexe (Strelitzia) is situated, adjacent to the main house. The all wood room comes with a private sit-out looking onto

a tropical garden with views of the backwaters beyond.

Just past the Annexe is one of the Superior Garden rooms (Begonia), which is located within the main house, but with independent access through the South garden. This spacious room also has a private sit-out filled with exotic plants.

The second Superior Garden Room (Calliandra), is at the entrance to the main house, with a view of the garden on one side and the internal courtyard on the other. Well appointed with old world rosewood furniture, this is the perfect space to de-stress, listening to the relaxing sound from a garden waterfall built with rocks found embedded in the property..

The black and grey rectangular pool blends into the natural surroundings.

Explore

The property has a wide variety of fruit, spice and flowering plants and trees on it.

The location of the property is such that the visitors get a first hand experience of the famed 'God's own Country' experience. Amaryllis is surrounded by attractions which are steeped in history, heritage, nature, wildlife, etc. all around. These include Edakkal Caves & Heritage Museum, Muthanga Wildlife Park, Tholpetty Wildlife Park, Banasura Sagar Dam, to mention a few. ■



HVS' WTTC-II State Ranking Survey 2015

HVS India in association with World Travel & Tourism Council-India Initiative (WTTC-II) released the fourth biennial edition of State Ranking Survey analysing the state-wise potential of Travel and Tourism in India and the relative competitiveness of different States. The evaluation has been carried out in 30 States by giving weightage under 12 parameters. A snap-shot of the Report:

12 parameters and their respective weights used to determine the actual ranking index corresponding to their individual impact on hospitality industry in the survey were:

IDENTIFIED PARAMETERS AND ASSIGNED WEIGHTS

Parameters	Assigned Weight	Impact
Luxury Tax on Hotels	25	High
State Expenditure on Tourism	25	High
Tourist Visits	20	High
Presence of Branded Hotel Rooms	10	Medium
GSDP Per Capita	10	Medium
Effectiveness of Marketing Campaign	10	Medium
Urbanisation	10	Medium
Road and Railway Infrastructure	10	Medium
Aircraft Movement	10	Medium
Literacy Rates	5	Low
Ease of Doing Business	10	Medium
Intangible Aspects	15	Medium
Total	160	

Luxury Tax on Hotels:

Luxury Tax is a major debatable subject for the Indian travel & tourism industry. Currently, the percentage of Luxury Tax varies vastly across the different states ranging from 0 to 20%. The chart below lists LT in 30 States and the weightage given to states.

POINT ALLOCATION FOR LUXURY TAX ON HOTELS

	Luxury Tax	Calculated On	Effective Tax Rate	Points Obtained	Rank 2015	Rank 2013	Rank 2011	Rank 2009	Variance (13-15)	Variance (09-15)
Arunachal Pradesh	0.0%	-	0.0%	25	1	1	1	1	0	0
Jammu & Kashmir	0.0%	-	0.0%	25	1	1	1	1	0	0
Manipur	0.0%	-	0.0%	25	1	1	1	1	0	0
Mizoram	0.0%	-	0.0%	25	1	1	1	1	0	0
Nagaland	0.0%	-	0.0%	25	1	1	1	1	0	0
Odisha	0.0%	-	0.0%	25	1	1	1	1	0	0
Sikkim	0.0%	-	0.0%	25	1	1	1	1	0	0
Uttar Pradesh	5.0%	Actual Tariff	5.0%	21	8	8	9	8	0	0
Andhra Pradesh	5.0%	Published Tariff	7.0%	18	9	10	11	12	1	3
Telangana	5.0%	Published Tariff	7.0%	18	9					
Gujarat	6.0%	Published Tariff	8.0%	18	11	11	12	13	0	2
Punjab	8.0%	Actual Tariff	8.0%	18	11	11	8	15	0	4
Uttarakhand	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	15	13	8	9	8	-5	-5
Bihar	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	15	13	13	14	16	0	3
Haryana	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	15	13	13	25	8	0	-5
Madhya Pradesh	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	15	13	13	14	16	0	3
Maharashtra	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	15	13	13	14	16	0	3
Rajasthan	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	15	13	13	14	16	0	3
West Bengal	10.0%	Actual Tariff	10.0%	15	13	13	14	16	0	3
Goa	12.0%	Actual Tariff	12.0%	15	20	21	14	8	1	-12
Karnataka	12.0%	Actual Tariff	12.0%	15	20	21	23	24	1	4
Assam	12.0%	Actual Tariff	12.0%	15	20	21	26	13	1	-7
Kerala	12.5%	Actual Tariff	12.5%	11	23	24	24	22	1	-1
Jharkhand	12.5%	Actual Tariff	12.5%	11	23	24	13	23	1	0
Chhattisgarh	10.0%	Published Tariff	13.0%	11	25	26	14	27	1	2
Himachal Pradesh	10.0%	Published Tariff	13.0%	11	25	13	14	25	-12	0
Tripura	15.0%	Actual Tariff	15.0%	11	27	13	14	16	-14	-11
Tamil Nadu	12.5%	Published Tariff	17.0%	7	28	28	27	25	0	-3
Delhi	15.0%	Published Tariff	20.0%	7	29	26	27	29	-3	0
Meghalaya	20.0%	Actual Tariff	20.0%	7	29	29	29	27	0	-2

Note: Rankings for Andhra Pradesh from 2009 to 2013 include Telangana.
Source: HVS Research



State Expenditure on Tourism:

Although the average state expenditure on tourism has seen a positive growth over the last five years, the amount as a percentage of the total expenditure continues to be dismally low. Sikkim continued to top the chart with 2.84% of total expenditure in 2014/15. The biggest movers this year in terms of tourism expenditure were Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, etc. J&K managed to move up one place to the second rank, displacing Goa.

POINT ALLOCATION FOR STATE EXPENDITURE ON TOURISM

	Revenue Expenditure* (₹ in lakh)		Capital Expenditure** (₹ in lakh)		Total State Expenditure (₹ in lakh)			Tourism Spend as a % of Total Expenditure	Points Obtained	Rank 2015	Rank 2013	Rank 2011	Rank 2009	Variance (13-15)	Variance (09-15)
	All Sectors	Tourism	All Sectors	Tourism	All Sectors	Tourism	Tourism								
Sikkim	61,133	28	74,262	3,812	1,35,395	3,840	2.836%	25	1	1	1	2	0	1	
Jammu & Kashmir	3,24,611	933	1,42,599	2,078	4,67,209	3,012	0.645%	25	2	3	2	1	1	-1	
Goa	80,995	642	2,10,306	757	2,91,301	1,398	0.480%	20	3	2	3	3	-1	0	
Arunachal Pradesh	71,793	125	64,796	295	1,36,589	420	0.307%	15	4	16	8	5	12	1	
Gujarat	9,62,166	292	17,56,793	6,210	27,18,959	6,502	0.239%	10	5	7	6	12	2	7	
Uttarakhand	2,44,745	39	2,24,248	645	4,68,993	684	0.146%	10	6	4	4	4	-2	-2	
Himachal Pradesh	1,97,836	341	68,074	22	2,65,910	363	0.136%	10	7	11	16	18	4	11	
Manipur	76,276	58	2,44,272	373	3,20,548	431	0.134%	10	8	23	11	11	15	3	
Delhi	2,75,409	453	92,251	1	3,67,660	454	0.123%	10	9	10	20	13	1	4	
Kerala	7,19,740	1,480	18,04,438	1,414	25,24,178	2,894	0.115%	10	10	5	9	7	-5	-3	
Karnataka	11,07,573	1,223	28,51,959	3,072	39,59,532	4,295	0.108%	10	11	6	5	18	-5	7	
Meghalaya	99,028	294	2,14,881	11	3,13,909	305	0.097%	5	12	9	14	15	-3	3	
Telangana	7,97,893	1,123	5,01,603	0	12,99,497	1,123	0.086%	5	13						
Odisha	6,28,814	369	14,86,068	1,235	21,14,882	1,604	0.076%	5	14	19	15	18	5	4	
West Bengal	10,59,782	607	28,96,473	1,880	39,56,255	2,487	0.063%	5	15	20	27	25	5	10	
Maharashtra	18,44,226	3,344	45,99,765	637	64,43,991	3,981	0.062%	5	16	12	7	9	-4	-7	
Mizoram	57,644	54	2,62,323	100	3,19,967	154	0.048%	5	17	18	18	10	1	-7	
Madhya Pradesh	9,90,138	863	31,27,484.30	860	41,17,622	1,723	0.042%	5	18	17	19	14	-1	-4	
Chhattisgarh	4,61,908	433	10,17,653	180	14,79,561	613	0.041%	5	19	13	12	12	-6	-7	
Nagaland	79,114	80	1,34,948	0	2,14,062	80	0.037%	5	20	8	13	6	-12	-14	
Jharkhand	3,94,879	81	5,37,917	185	9,32,797	266	0.029%	5	21	27	10	7	6	-14	
Uttar Pradesh	19,74,249	364	40,70,745	1,311	60,44,993	1,674	0.028%	5	22	22	23	25	0	3	
Haryana	5,27,027	32	7,30,765	315	12,57,792	347	0.028%	5	23	25	25	25	2	2	
Assam	4,86,313	689	34,96,956	280	39,83,269	969	0.024%	5	24	24	26	25	0	1	
Andhra Pradesh	9,81,418	331	5,28,849	30	15,10,267	361	0.024%	5	25	28	29	18	3	-7	
Rajasthan	10,53,872	326	30,73,975	422	41,27,847	748	0.018%	5	26	21	21	18	-5	-8	
Tripura	81,175	32	5,85,437	79	6,66,611	111	0.017%	5	27	29	24	18	2	-9	
Tamil Nadu	12,73,898	20	29,74,101	590	42,47,999	610	0.014%	5	28	26	22	16	-2	-12	
Bihar	9,17,654	114	9,17,654	114	18,35,309	227	0.012%	5	29	14	17	18	-15	-11	
Punjab	4,48,937	0	4,91,463	38	9,40,400	38	0.004%	5	30	15	28	29	-15	-1	

*Revenue Expenditure - incurred in the course of regular business transactions and availed during the same accounting year.
 **Capital Expenditure - incurred for acquiring a fixed asset or one which results in increasing the earning capacity and is availed in multiple accounting years.
 Note: Rankings for Andhra Pradesh from 2009 to 2013 include Telangana.
 Source: RBI - State Finances: A Study of Budgets 2014-15

Presence of Branded Hotel Rooms:

The top 10 states in terms of the density of branded hotel rooms remained mostly the same compared to last survey. Delhi topped the list with 13,277 branded hotel rooms while north-eastern states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland have no branded accommodation at all. Chhattisgarh, Assam, and Himachal Pradesh are the only three states to witness an upward movement in this category.

POINT ALLOCATION FOR PRESENCE OF BRANDED HOTEL ROOMS

	No. of Branded Rooms	State Area (Km ²)	Branded Rooms per 100 Km ²	Points Obtained	Rank 2015	Rank 2013	Rank 2011	Rank 2009	Variance (13-15)	Variance (09-15)
Goa	4,909	3,702	132.60	10	2	2	2	0	0	
Haryana	6,252	44,212	14.14	10	3	3	3	4	0	1
Kerala	3,300	38,863	8.49	8	4	4	4	3	0	-1
Tamil Nadu	9,503	1,30,058	7.31	8	5	5	6	6	0	1
Maharashtra	21,570	3,07,713	7.01	8	6	6	5	7	0	1
Karnataka	12,759	1,91,791	6.65	6	7	7	7	5	0	-2
Telangana	5,875	1,14,840	5.12	6	8					
Punjab	2,068	50,362	4.11	6	9	8	8	16	-1	7
West Bengal	2,721	88,752	3.07	4	10	9	9	11	-1	1
Gujarat	5,727	1,96,024	2.92	4	11	11	15	14	0	3
Uttarakhand	1,289	53,483	2.41	4	12	12	10	8	0	-4
Rajasthan	7,328	3,42,239	2.14	2	13	13	13	13	0	0
Uttar Pradesh	4,425	2,40,928	1.84	2	14	14	14	17	0	3
Andhra Pradesh	1,719	1,60,205	1.07	2	15	10	11	15	-5	0
Himachal Pradesh	562	55,673	1.01	0	16	17	16	12	1	-4
Tripura	100	10,486	0.95	0	17	16	17	10	-1	-7
Sikkim	63	7,096	0.89	0	18	15	12	9	-3	-9
Jharkhand	421	79,714	0.53	0	19	18	19	19	-1	0
Madhya Pradesh	1,587	3,08,245	0.51	0	20	19	18	18	-1	-2
Assam	357	78,438	0.46	0	21	22	21	22	1	1
Chhattisgarh	416	1,35,191	0.31	0	22	25	25	25	3	3
Jammu & Kashmir	556	2,22,236	0.25	0	23	21	22	21	-2	-2
Odisha	282	2,22,236	0.13	0	24	20	20	20	-4	-4
Bihar	46	94,163	0.05	0	25	23	23	24	-2	-1
Arunachal Pradesh	20	83,743	0.02	0	26	24	24	23	-2	-3
Manipur	0	22,327	0.00	0	27	25	25	25	-2	-2
Meghalaya	0	22,429	0.00	0	27	25	25	25	-2	-2
Mizoram	0	21,081	0.00	0	27	25	25	25	-2	-2
Nagaland	0	16,579	0.00	0	27	25	25	25	-2	-2

Note: Rankings for Andhra Pradesh from 2009 to 2013 include Telangana.
 Source: HVS Research

Effective Marketing:

For analyzing the effectiveness of marketing, HVS India used the international benchmarking tools of Alexa.com to analyse the volume of traffic the State tourism websites' received. Among the state tourism websites, Bihar tourism website continued to hold on to its top position among states, followed by Kerala, Maharashtra, etc. Goa and Mizoram witnessed major upward trend in this category.

POINT ALLOCATION FOR EFFECTIVENESS OF MARKETING

	Official Website	Alexa Overall Ranking	Points Obtained	Rank 2015	Rank 2013	Rank 2011	Rank 2009	Variance (13-15)	Variance (09-15)
Bihar	bstdc.bih.nic.in	16,767	10	1	1	2	1	0	0
Kerala	keralatourism.org	51,418	10	2	2	1	3	0	1
Maharashtra	maharashtratourism.gov.in	82,550	10	3	4	3	6	1	3
Delhi	delhitourism.gov.in/delhitourism/index.jsp	82,658	8	4	3	11	5	-1	1
Goa	goa-tourism.com	1,30,162	8	5	9	8	18	4	13
Madhya Pradesh	mp-tourism.com	1,40,784	8	6	6	4	13	0	7
Gujarat	gujarattourism.com	1,44,754	6	7	7	10	8	0	1
Telangana	telanganatourism.gov.in	1,57,604	6	8					
Karnataka	karnatakaholidays.net	1,75,396	6	9	11	6	12	2	3
Andhra Pradesh	aptdc.gov.in	1,86,316	4	10	10	13	14	0	4
Rajasthan	rajasthan-tourism.gov.in	2,18,964	4	11	5	7	2	-6	-9
Tamil Nadu	tamilnadutourism.org	2,28,665	4	12	12	5	21	0	9
Mizoram	tourism.mizoram.gov.in	2,32,735	2	13	16	25	26	3	13
Jammu & Kashmir	jk-tourism.org	2,91,812	2	14	20	15	23	6	9
Uttarakhand	uttarakhand-tourism.gov.in	2,95,943	2	15	17	12	11	2	-4
West Bengal	westbengal-tourism.gov.in	3,02,219	0	16	13	17	4	-3	-12
Sikkim	sikkim-tourism.gov.in	4,22,199	0	17	19	20	19	2	2
Meghalaya	megtourism.gov.in	4,67,991	0	18	21	22	17	3	-1
Haryana	haryanatourism.gov.in	4,82,014	0	19	18	19	15	-1	-4
Odisha	orissatourism.gov.in	5,27,254	0	20	15	18	9	-5	-11
Chhattisgarh	chhattisgarh-tourism.net	7,90,857	0	21	25	16	28	4	7
Uttar Pradesh	up-tourism.com	9,00,325	0	22	14	14	16	-8	-6
Arunachal Pradesh	arunachal-tourism.com	9,16,232	0	23	24	26	22	1	-1
Himachal Pradesh	himachal-tourism.gov.in	14,51,118	0	24	8	9	10	-16	-14
Punjab	punjab-tourism.gov.in	15,05,685	0	25	27	23	27	2	2
Jharkhand	jharkhand-tourism.in	16,05,895	0	26	22	27	25	-4	-1
Manipur	manipur.nic.in/tourism.htm	17,33,361	0	27	28	21	20	1	-7
Nagaland*	tourismnagaland.com	21,64,610	0	28	29	29	29	1	1
Assam	assam-tourism.org	1,09,64,844	0	29	23	24	7	-6	-22
Tripura	tripura-tourism.nic.in	1,27,48,974	0	30	26	28	24	-4	-6
Average		13,14,004							
Incredible India	incredibleindia.org	63,701							

*Recent data for tourismnagaland.com is not available. The last available data has been used for this website.
 Note: Rankings for Andhra Pradesh from 2009 to 2013 include Telangana.
 Source: Alexa.com August 2015

Road & Rail infrastructure:

Travel & Tourism is closely linked to transport policies and infrastructure development. In India, a major chunk of tourist movement is domestic in nature and therefore depends heavily on roadways and railways as modes of transportation. Across three consecutive surveys, Delhi has emerged as the overall leader in both roadway and railway infrastructure. While Punjab retained the same position as in 2013, Jharkhand climbed four places compared to last survey whereas Himachal dropped four ranks.

POINT ALLOCATION FOR ROAD AND RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

	Points Obtained			Rank 2015	Rank 2013	Rank 2011	Variance (13-15)	Variance (11-15)
	Road	Rail	Total					
Delhi	5	5	10	1	1	1	0	0
Punjab	5	5	10	1	1	2	0	1
West Bengal	4	5	9	3	3	6	0	3
Kerala	5	4	9	3	3	2	0	-1
Uttar Pradesh	4	4	8	5	3	2	-2	-3
Tamil Nadu	4	4	8	5	6	2	1	-3
Bihar	2	5	7	7	6	6	-1	-1
Goa	5	2	7	7	6	6	-1	-1
Maharashtra	4	3	7	7	9	12	2	5
Haryana	3	4	7	7	9	6	2	-1
Assam	2	4	6	11	13	12	2	1
Tripura	5	1	6	11	9	11	-2	0
Andhra Pradesh	3	3	6	11	15	12	4	1
Gujarat	3	3	6	11	9	6	-2	-5
Karnataka	3	2	5	15	13	12	-2	-3
Jharkhand	0	5	5	15	19	19	4	4
Nagaland	4	1	5	15	17	17	2	2
Odisha	1	3	4	18	19	23	1	5
Madhya Pradesh	1	3	4	18	19	19	1	1
Rajasthan	2	2	4	18	15	16	-3	-2
Himachal Pradesh	2	1	3	21	17	19	-4	-2
Uttarakhand	2	1	3	21	19	19	-2	-2
Chhattisgarh	1	2	3	21	19	17	-2	-4
Sikkim	3	0	3	21	24	25	3	4
Telangana	0	2	2	25				
Manipur	1	0	1	26	26	25	0	-1
Jammu & Kashmir	0	1	1	26	26	25	0	-1
Mizoram	1	0	1	26	24	23	-2	-3
Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	29	28	29	-1	0
Meghalaya	0	0	0	29	28	25	-1	-4

Note: Rankings for Andhra Pradesh from 2009 to 2013 include Telangana.
 Source: HVS Research



POINT ALLOCATION FOR AIRCRAFT MOVEMENT

	Total Aircraft Movement*	Points Obtained	Rank 2015	Rank 2013	Rank 2011	Rank 2009	Variance (13-15)	Variance (09-15)
Maharashtra	3,21,399	10	1	1	1	1	0	0
Delhi	3,00,889	10	2	2	2	2	0	0
Tamil Nadu	1,57,490	8	3	3	3	3	0	0
Karnataka	1,44,989	6	4	4	4	4	0	0
West Bengal	1,07,253	6	5	6	5	6	1	1
Telangana	94,057	4	6					
Kerala	92,702	4	7	7	7	7	0	0
Gujarat	47,765	2	8	8	8	8	0	0
Goa	33,422	2	9	11	10	11	2	2
Assam	30,863	2	10	9	9	9	-1	-1
Uttar Pradesh	28,550	2	11	13	13	13	2	2
Rajasthan	28,510	2	12	12	11	10	0	-2
Jammu & Kashmir	28,355	2	13	10	12	12	-3	-1
Madhya Pradesh	19,746	2	14	14	14	14	0	0
Andhra Pradesh	14,430	2	15	5	6	5	-10	-10
Bihar	12,695	2	16	16	16	19	0	3
Odisha	12,512	2	17	15	15	15	-2	-2
Punjab	9,410	2	18	18	17	17	0	-1
Chhattisgarh	8,425	2	19	17	19	18	-2	-1
Jharkhand	7,642	2	20	21	20	21	1	1
Tripura	7,612	2	21	19	21	16	-2	-5
Uttarakhand	4,840	2	22	22	21	22	0	0
Manipur	4,803	2	23	20	18	20	-3	-3
Haryana	0	0	24	22	21	22	-2	-2
Himachal Pradesh	0	0	24	22	21	22	-2	-2
Meghalaya	0	0	24	22	21	22	-2	-2
Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	24	22	21	22	-2	-2
Mizoram	0	0	24	22	21	22	-2	-2
Nagaland	0	0	24	22	21	22	-2	-2
Sikkim	0	0	24	22	21	22	-2	-2

*Denotes number of take-offs and landings (one flight constitutes two movements).
Note: Rankings for Andhra Pradesh from 2009 to 2013 include Telangana.
Source: Airports Authority of India (Traffic News - Annexure IIC), 2015
(Data from Apr-14 to Mar-15)

Aircraft Movement:

A strong economic growth coupled with the aspirations of a rising middle class has driven the sector to new heights in India. Maharashtra, Delhi and Tamilnadu remain the top three destinations for aircraft movements since 2009. West Bengal obtained fifth rank this year. Uttar Pradesh has also risen two places in this year's survey.

POINT ALLOCATION FOR EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

	Ease of Doing Business Score	Points Obtained	Rank 2015
Gujarat	71.1%	10	1
Andhra Pradesh	70.1%	10	2
Jharkhand	63.1%	10	3
Chhattisgarh	62.5%	10	4
Madhya Pradesh	62.0%	10	5
Rajasthan	61.0%	8	6
Odisha	52.1%	8	7
Maharashtra	49.4%	8	8
Karnataka	48.5%	8	9
Uttar Pradesh	47.4%	8	10
West Bengal	46.9%	6	11
Tamil Nadu	44.6%	6	12
Telangana	42.5%	6	13
Haryana	40.7%	6	14
Delhi	37.4%	6	15
Punjab	36.7%	4	16
Himachal Pradesh	24.0%	4	17
Kerala	22.9%	4	18
Goa	21.7%	4	19
Bihar	16.4%	4	20
Assam	14.8%	2	21
Uttarakhand	13.4%	2	22
Tripura	9.3%	2	23
Sikkim	7.2%	2	24
Mizoram	6.4%	2	25
Jammu & Kashmir	5.9%	0	26
Meghalaya	4.4%	0	27
Nagaland	3.4%	0	28
Arunachal Pradesh	1.2%	0	29
Manipur	-	-	-

Note: Visits were not conducted in Manipur due to prevailing conditions in the state.
Source: Assessment of State Implementation of Business Reforms, Make in India, World Bank Group, KPMG, CII & FICCI, September 2015

Ease of Doing Business:

Ease of doing business has been a sore point for long, considering the high barriers to entry and cumbersome procedures required for obtaining approvals and clearances in the country. In 2014, States have agreed on a 98-point agenda to implement business reforms as part of Make in India programme. As per the HVS India survey, Gujarat was the front runner in this parameter with an ease of doing business score of 71.1%, followed by Andhra Pradesh (70.1%), Jharkhand (63.1%), etc.



Why comply with the 2013 Sexual Harassment Act ?

Shweta Luthra

In 2013, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 was notified, followed by rules of the same name. Its intention was to ensure that employers took the responsibility of providing a safe environment for working women, free from sexual harassment. While this legislation has become a popular topic of discussion in the Indian media and there seems to be a distinct growth in consciousness on the subject, it has not achieved the expected level of compliance.

A survey conducted by Ernst and Young earlier this year indicated that over 30% of companies were still not compliant with this law. As this survey was conducted only amongst large and mid-sized companies, it would not be incorrect to say that the statistics are far worse in reality. From my experience in the industry, I have come across senior executives in smaller companies (smaller in terms of number of employees, not revenue), who genuinely believe that such issues do not exist in their “close-knit” professional community. In reality, sexual harassment is a universal problem, unrestricted by financial or social status or the type of organisation one works with. While many believe that in smaller companies such instances would be rare, the opposite is also believed by larger organisations who believe that their HR mechanisms make their work environment harassment free. A recent report showed that while Wipro reported over 100 cases of sexual harass-

ment in 2014-15, companies like Reliance Industries, Bajaj Auto, ONGC, L&T and HDFC had no cases to report. This seems highly improbable. Although no employer can be blamed for the behaviour indulged in by their employees, ignoring the issue is a blind alley.

Misconceptions about The Act

I often get asked by prospective clients why they should comply with the Sexual Harassment Act. Their negative opinions towards this law include the fact that it has resulted in giving power to women employees to retaliate against their superiors when unhappy with their professional growth. While, not unfounded, these fears are a result of misconception. It is hard for any person, victim or witness, to file a complaint of sexual harassment, but it is harder to create the evidence to support that complaint, which is necessary for an inquiry. Moreover, the 2013 Act requires immediate disciplinary action to be taken against any complainant that files a false or

malicious complaint or evidence.

The law may not be fool-proof (no law really is), but that cannot be a reason for non-compliance. Most importantly, compliance to this law is NOT optional.

Who Should Comply?

This law is applicable to all government departments and offices, government and private companies, hotels, restaurants, associations and educational institutions, and being “Vishaka Compliant” is not considered as being legally compliant. In today’s scenario, where clearly defined substantive law and procedures exist, being Vishaka compliant is just not enough.

The 2013 Act is mandatory for any organisation that employs over 10 persons (irrespective of how many of them are female). Especially in organisations where employees are constantly in contact with outsiders, the implementation of this law is essential. For instance, an IT company employee usually comes into contact only with other employees, and occasionally





with clients or customers, however, in the hospitality industry, an employee may spend more time with guests and customers than with co-workers. The employer's responsibility to provide a safe working environment extends to third parties as well. Sexual harassment under the 2013 Act is defined as an "unwelcome act or behaviour" at the workplace, irrespective of who the harasser is. Having measures for the prevention of sexual harassment incidents and redressal of such complaints sends a message to employees that their employer is willing to support them, but shows a zero tolerance policy to guests who may otherwise overstep boundaries believing that they could get away with such behaviour. Also, when the reverse occurs (guest feeling harassed by an employee), the existence of such mechanisms show an employer's commitment to take strict action against the accused employee even after the guest leaves.

What an employer should do

The requirements under the 2013 Act and Rules :

- Set up an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) consisting of a minimum of 4 members (Senior woman employee as Presiding Officer; two other employees and one external member from an NGO who has experience in woman's rights related issues, or is a lawyer). The external member's presence is required during every inquiry in order to ensure neutrality by bring-

ing in an outsider's perspective.

- Formulate an anti-sexual harassment policy that is in compliance with the 2013 Act and Rules and make sure that all your employees have access to it. You may even decide to make your organisation's policy gender neutral. While the law is gender specific towards women, it allows for an organisation to expand its scope to male employees as well.
- Conduct training and awareness sessions for the ICC – they are a quasi civil judicial body. Their recommendations must be appealed against in a higher court of law and they cannot be expected to give recommendations which can severely impact the professional lives of persons without knowing the procedures to be followed during an inquiry.
- Conduct awareness sessions for the senior management – it is this group of individuals that decides when and how to implement such policies in the organisation. If they are unaware of the extent of their responsibilities and liabilities, how can they authorise such compliance measures?
- Conduct sensitisation programs for all other employees on issues relating to sexual harassment – prevention is better than cure. Instead of increasing spurious complaints, it usually improves behaviour amongst employees.
- Submit Annual Returns as per the 2013

Act and Rules with details of training and awareness sessions conducted, as well as information relating to number of sexual harassment complaints addressed by the ICC and preventive measures undertaken by the employer in the last year.

- Approach the Local Complaints Committee (LCC) or police department where the respondent is a third party (not an employee), over whom the ICC or employer has no control.

So what happens if the employer does not comply with the provisions of the 2013 Act? If any employee or third-party approaches the authorities, or if the government decides to audit and check your compliance activity and it is discovered that the provisions of the 2013 Act are not complied with, the employer is liable to pay a fine of up to Rs. 50,000 and in case of further non-compliance, a fine of up to Rs. 1,00,000. There is also the possibility of cancellation of business licenses or governmental approvals. Negative publicity aside, this is not a risk any organisation would like to take. More importantly, non-compliance leads to incidents of sexual harassment going unchecked and victims choosing the only way out – quit and join another company, while the perpetrator enjoys his/her status quo.

The law against sexual harassment in India is not perfect: it aims to protect only women, it has some contradictory provisions, and a majority of state governments are yet to set up LCCs, but at least there finally is a law against such behaviour. Until 2013, there were few legal provisions against sexual harassment in India. Sexual harassment was not a criminal offence, unless it was of a serious nature like attempt to rape, or molestation. It was public outrage arising out of the Nirbhaya rape case that convinced the government to legislate this hastily drafted law, but despite its flaws, it can be used to prevent instances of sexual harassment, and every employer should make an effort to make the best use of it. They can protect their employees – at least, at the workplace. ■

The author is an advocate, with a M.Sc. in Criminology from Oxford. She acts as an External Member on many ICCs and provides legal consultation on sexual harassment matters.

Kerala Hospitality Sector - Ahead of Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2016



D Chandrasenan Nair

Health Imperative of Kerala Hospitality Sector

In the interest of public health, the Kerala hotel industry began efforts to make hotels and restaurants tobacco smoke-free in 2013. Key office bearers and senior representatives of hotel associations including Kerala Hotels and Restaurants Association (KHRA); South India Hotels and Restaurants Association (SIHRA); Association of Approved and Classified Hotels of Kerala (AACHK) and South Kerala Hoteliers Forum (SKHF) were united in their commitment to put up mandated signages and in preventing customers and employees from smoking in their premises.

At a press conference held in December 2013, major hotel industry representatives willingly came together to implement smoke-free rules as they looked at the larger benefits that will accrue to public health and make hotels and restaurants public health friendly. The 20,000-member-strong Kerala Hotels and Restaurants Association unanimously approved implementation of smoke-free rules at the Annual General Meeting of the association.

The first phase of activities resulted in widespread awareness amongst the hotel and restaurant industry to make their premises smoke-free – to benefit the health and well-being of valued customers and guests and for the welfare of staff members.

GATS 2016 - Kerala

Kerala and India are gearing up for the next phase of the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) - the global standard to systematically monitor adult tobacco use and track key tobacco control indicators.

GATS is a part of the Global Tobacco Surveillance System (GTSS) initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and partners to assist countries in

establishing tobacco control surveillance and monitoring programs. GATS enhances countries' capacity to design, implement and evaluate tobacco control interventions. It is a nationally representative household survey of adults 15 years of age or older, using a standard protocol, intended to generate comparable data within and across countries.

The next round of GATS is expected to begin in India and Kerala during January 2016. Conducted in coordination with Union

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the WHO; it covers

- Tobacco use prevalence (smoking and smokeless tobacco products)
- Second-hand tobacco smoke exposure and policies
- Cessation
- Knowledge, attitudes and perceptions
- Exposure to media
- Economics

What can the hospitality sector do?

1. Follow smoke-free rules – management and staff to lead by example
2. Set up legally mandated 'No Smoking' boards, announcing that the premises is healthier
3. Gently advise guests on the efficacy of going smoke-free – Examples of Marriott and Westin would come in handy

Together, we can make Kerala hotels and restaurants healthy outlets that promotes all-round well-being!!!

GATS and the Kerala Hospitality Sector

One of the measures in GATS is second-hand tobacco smoke exposure. The last round of GATS in 2009-10 revealed the highest second-hand smoke exposure in restaurants among various public places. This trend needs to be reversed.

In the last couple of years, the hospitality sector in Kerala has collectively put in zealous efforts to go smoke-free. The effectiveness of the measures undertaken over the last couple of years would come through the globally recognised standard called GATS.

D Chandrasenan Nair is CEO, Hotel Pankaj, Trivandrum and General Convenor, South Kerala Hoteliers Forum



Winning the world with Indian wine

Indian Wine is wooing the world these days. After battling a downturn things are looking up and appreciation for the Indian grape produce is flowing in from the newbie Indian consumer to the international connoisseur. Delisting it as alcohol and creating a wine culture in the country will keep the cheers for Indian wine going, finds **Odelle Amaral D'Silva**



SUVEER SODHI
Director of Food and Beverage, Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel, New Delhi



AJAY SHETTY
Managing Director and CEO
Myra Vineyards



VIKRAM ACHANTA
Co-founder, CEO of Tulleeho



KAMALJIT SINGH
Resident Manager at Alila Diwa Goa



RANJIT SURVE
GM Sales & Marketing Pause Wines



NIKHIL AGARWAL
Sommelier and Director,
All Things Nice



DR. NEERAJ AGARWAL
VP - Operations, Sula Vineyards



GAGAN SHARMA
Gagan Sharma, Sommelier and Wine
Educator at Wi-Not Beverage Solutions

Indian Wine is 'in' these days, did you know? Reports about the industry growing by 21 percent are recently out, wine clubs are proliferating and tours of wineries and vineyards are de rigueur. While protectionist policies of government have given many wineries a much needed head-start, surviving the recent downturn has not been easy and having witnessed the effects, most players are taking it into their hands to grow the market not content to wait for policy makers to give the industry a boost. And things are looking up. Indian wines are winning recognition among connoisseurs, newbie drinkers, the swish set in most Tier-I and Tier-II cities, with an added interest from foreign tourists to try Indian wines. Homegrown wines are even making their way onto the tables of reputed Michelin star restaurants abroad.

The Indian wine industry has emerged only in the last couple of decades compared to international wines that have existed for centuries and one cannot justify a comparison between them. Having said that, Indian wine, over the past decade or so, has been carving a niche for itself among new world wines. The more popular varieties being Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot, Shiraz, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, the emerging Tempranillo and Malbec owing to the affinity with the Indian palate and tastes, even though sales figures may not purely suggest so. "The change is clearly visible in the demand for wines in general. Domestic wines are preferred as a certain segment over some imported wines; however they still need a long way to go to meet the best of the wines internationally," says Kamaljit Singh, Resident Manager at Alila Diwa Goa.

From a couple of brands, there is immense grape varietal in the market today. Because of its quality comparable with the new world wines, they are being appreciated by both domestic and international consumers. Vikram Achanta, CEO and Co-founder Tulleeho, a provider of beverage education and consulting services, feels that the short supply chain in India also ensures that Indian wine can be more predictable in quality as compared to an imported wine which through no fault of its own may spend days or months in customs warehouses or in transit.

Gagan Sharma, Sommelier and Wine Educator at Wi-Not Beverage Solutions agrees saying, "In comparison to international winestyles, some of the Indian wines are at par or even taking the lead. However, while price, availability, and freshness are some of the pros then for the domestic wines, lack of definition of style, inconsistent logistics and storage, and unable to challenge the pre-existing prominent wine styles are some of the cons, pointed out by wine experts.

International Wine festivals

Contributing in no small way to the growing evolution of wines produced here and also their international recognition are international wine festivals. India wine makers winning international awards have boosted the confidence

What's turning wine sour

Each county has different rules, different requirements for registrations etc. and this is hampering the growth – small wineries can't sell their produce in other countries. People's Knowledge about wine is limited, limited people are aware in India about wines, there is a limitation to promote the alcobev, another limiting factor. - **Dr Neeraj Agarwal, VP - Operations, Sula Vineyards**

High cost structures, Inter state taxes on wine, High label registration charges for wines, Limited adoption on hotel menus as also premium free standing outlets
Vikram Achanta, Co-founder ,CEO of Tulleeho

Right now I would say it is the interstate transfer, excise duties and tax are too high together with registration charges. For example the interstate transfer from Haryana to Rajasthan you have to pay a lot. The number one problem is that wine is treated on par with liquor, no different parameters exist for wine. Taxes should be levied according to the alcohol content. The other roadblocks pertain to transfer. In Delhi , for example you needed to have a bonded warehouse. So if I have to introduce 5 wine brands I will have to incur a minimum cost of 10 lakh for brand registration charges, label registration, deposit for bonded warehouse and other taxes. We would like the State government bodies to support wine makers and the Central government to intervene so that the wine industry can support and develop tourism. Tourists consume a lot of wine especially in states like Rajasthan.

Ranjit Surve, GM Sales&Marketing Pause Wines

The Government has been helpful towards the wine industry in particular by helping in the setup process, but a lot can still be done. To begin with, we would like the Government to declassify wines from the broader liquor business and put it under the agro-based and food processing sector. Wine should not fall into the liquor category. Secondly, excise duty and taxes vary from state to state. There is no universal law across all states and obtaining clearances are tough

Ajay Shetty, MD Myra Vineyards

Getting wineries and importers to be in a position where they can stop giving huge discounts or offers to the trade to get them to list and sell their wines. The system of exclusivity of limiting wine lists to 2/3 Indian wine brands or buying only from one importer has to stop. The retail channel demands on wineries in terms of schemes is not viable and wineries that do give in either eventually pack up or are unable to grow.

Nikhil Agarwal, Dir, All Things Nice

The biggest issue the Indian wineries are facing is not in the market but within themselves and what transpires in the backend. FSSAI, IGPB, and MoFPI have clearly failed in bringing the wineries together and catering to their problems. While the wineries are friendly to each other, there lacks an association that would lead the brand - Wines of India. Unless the winemakers come together and form a consortium and push the community, it will only be a rat race and they will burn themselves in the process. Negligible support from the government fuels this demand even more and makes it the need of the hour to have a common motive, goal, and a voice.

Gagan Sharma, Sommelier Wine Educator at Wi-Not Beverage Solutions

of the fledgling market that is eager to try its wings. In an interview with the media talking about the participation of Sula wines at the 22nd Pro Wein held at Dusseldorf, Germany earlier this year, Cecilia Oldne, VP, Global brand ambassador and Head – International business, Sula Vineyards had remarked “Indian wine is beginning to generate interest and people are recognising the fact that India can make good wines. Nashik is also being recognised as a major wine producing region in India, she said. “As one of the youngest wine producing nations in the world, this is a major achievement for us,” Sula showcased some 10 labels at the show, including the new sparkling Sula Brut.

The Grover Zampas Art Collection Sau-

vignon Blanc 2014, won the international trophy at the Decanter Asia Wine Awards (DAWA) and became the first Indian wine producer to win a Decanter international trophy in the course of the around three decades of modern wine making in India. Two offerings by Grover Zampa Vineyards, Sauvignon Blanc and La Reserve Red have become a new addition to the menu and will be served by the glass at Michelin star restaurant, L'Arpège in Paris.

Ranjit Surve, GM Sales and Marketing Pause Wines commented “It is interesting the way Europeans appreciate Indian wines. We had conducted a wine tasting at FoodWorld Hospitality Exhibition and our interaction with a lady from Spain and an

Italian gentleman after tasting our Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc revealed that they were quite comparable to the Europeans ones tasted by them, with a little difference of fruit and flavours and aromas. In fact, the aroma of Indian tropical fruits like guava in these two are found to be quite unique.”

On the export front too the situation looks quite promising. India exports to around 22 countries, with Sula heading the herd of wine exports from India. Grover Zampa exports to about 20 countries too, Pause wines, a comparative smaller company itself has already finalised export deals to China and recently, to the USA despite the latter's strict parameters. “In the pipeline are exports to Europe, South Africa and the Gulf countries with promises of exports to Russia,” confirmed Surve.

Consumer's choice - Indian v/s imported?

Imported wines face many restrictions and delays before they reach retailers and tables in India, whereas Indian wines are easily available, with more competitive prices, and great taste. This is a definite advantage and one winemakers are eager to use. “Regulations such as FSSAI have ensured a stifling of supply of imported wine and many labels will no longer be seen in India. This opens up wine lists much more for Indian wine,” pointed out Achanta.

Growth in quality as well as increased experimentation by Indian wine makers by launching reserve / aged wines at premium price points has made the consumer as well as the hospitality industry take a fresh look at Indian wine. At the time of this report going to print Myra Vineyards had just unveiled, what it says is, the first of its kind in India, an unfiltered cuvee in limited edition of 300 cases, christened Misfit. In India wine makes up only 0.54 per cent of sales of alcohol cases in the country, but the wine market is growing at 14 per cent in most states and around 21 per cent in Maharashtra which is faster than other liquor categories. point out vineyard owners but there is much more scope to grow this market and the way to go is through consumer education.



Creating a Wine culture

Educating consumers and creating a wine culture has already begun in earnest, Wine consultancies are making headway in this arena by organising wine tastings, conducting trainings for corporates, hosting wine awards, providing advice on food pairings and offering other services to attract new demographics to the drink and create a wine culture in the country. Nikhil Agarwal, Founder, All Things Nice, explains “At All Things Nice we host several events associated with educating and informing wine aficionados as well as wine beginners of all ages. All Things Nice doesn’t endorse or promote a single wine brand, we work with every single Indian and imported wine brand to give consumers a taste of the best that’s available in India. The Indian Wine Consumer’s Choice Awards offers every Indian winery an opportunity to present itself directly to the consumer. Wine Week offers a larger audience (the city of Mumbai) an opportunity to enjoy any wine of their choice at select restaurants at unbelievable prices. For instance, we arrange for patrons to enjoy a set cost menu with a 30 per cent discount on select wines at the restaurants involved in wine week.”

Wine Culture in India is still at a very nascent stage. It is primarily limited to tier one and some tier two cities with domestically produced wines at the forefront. The burst of an international restaurant culture has helped elevate the popularity of wine greatly in cities like Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore and Delhi. Modern Retail stores have also made wine more accessible as part of the everyday household shopping experience. On the other hand, high pricing, lack of awareness and a preference for hard liquor have made it difficult to build a thriving wine culture in India. “The Tulleeho Wine Academy, is one of the leading providers in India of high quality wine education via the WSET (Wine and Spirits Education Trust) programme. Via this programme we have trained more than 700 people in the Indian wine and hospitality

industry. We also run consumer facing wine programs, several of them sponsored by wine companies such as Moet Hennessy and Pernod Ricard.” says Achanta.

Hospitality, a big part of the equation

Hotels and stand alone F&B outlets play a significant role in this whole equation of growing the market by providing a positive wine drinking experience for guests and patrons that would create a wine culture. Vneyards like Myra acknowledge this and have an association across a number of hotels, restaurants and bars and encourage F&B managers in hotels to do their bit too. “If we take a look at the kind of culture that exists in other countries where wine is just considered a natural pairing of food, then the number of hotel chains expanding their portfolios in the cities augurs well for the wine trade, says Agarwal. However, the prices of wines in hotels being prohibitive, discourages consumers from making it their preferred choice of beverage. Hotels, F&B departments, get Duty Free Licenses and purchase imported wines at those rates. If they passed on the benefit to patrons

they would get profits from volume of business generated, much more than the margins earned, feel wine experts. However, at the time of going to press it was learned that the government is set to reduce the Duty Free License discount allowed to hotels from 10 per cent of foreign earnings to just three per cent.

“Indian wines are selling at a much higher pace in the restaurant and hotels than ever before. All leading hotel chains have up to ten SKUs from Indian wineries. Taj, and ITC have even gone ahead to procure private labels from Indian wineries as their house pours. Indian as well as foreign denizens are experimenting with Indian wines and we see them mov-

ing much faster, and at times, more than the international counterparts,” Sharma informs us.

Sharma, arguably one of the youngest Sommeliers says, “Wi-Not and Its educational endeavour, Institute of Wine + Beverage Studies, has been working very closely with the Indian Grape Promotion Board (IGBP) and APEDA to promote Indian wines, domestically as well as internationally, training approx 400 trade and hospitality professionals each year with our major focus being the local produce. We also host the Indian Sommelier Championship.

“To ensure the right efforts are made in educating F&B staff, to be highly perceptive on their understanding of wines and constantly evolve with time, we do engage with multiple hospitality outlets through our tasting, cooking with wine sessions to give them a better understanding of the brand and portfolio” says Ajay Shetty, Founder Myra Wines.

“An emerging trend in the wine industry have been social media and smart phone apps that has empowered its users to break-free from the traditional snob associated with wines and have fun with it on their own terms, particularly amongst men who are more gadget-friendly. Another trend that has emerged includes the rise of calorie-conscious, reduced alcohol or portion-controlled wine for those aiming to lead a healthy and active lifestyle.” explains Suveer Sodhi,

Wine bottles are nudging their way onto the shelves of retailers, and ever since the health experts have given wine the thumbs up, it’s being offered as a healthier option to beer and hard liquor. “The traditional demography for wine consumption in the country has been women and more recently, it is the the younger drinker who is health conscious, well travelled, more keen on conversations with friends than getting high,” explains Singh of Hotel Alila Diwa Goa raising a glass of wine.

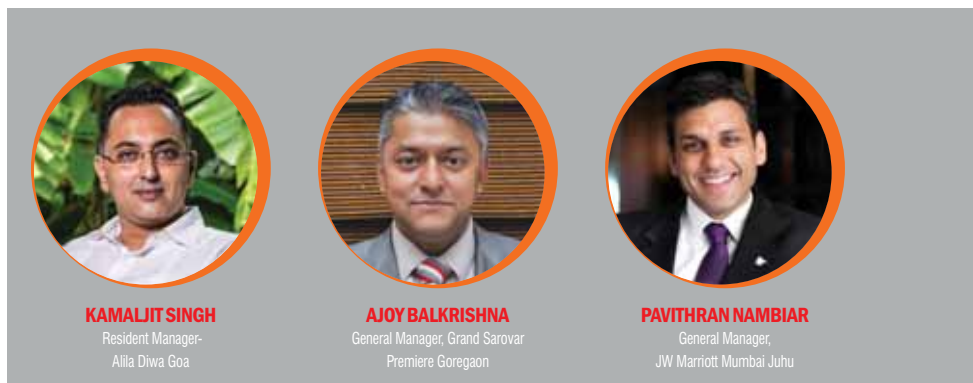
Raise a glass of wine, or two, then, is the message the industry is sending out for as Subhash Arora President Wine Producers Association puts it “Wine is not alcohol, it has some” ■



Hotel F&B: Time for a reality check

It's a known fact that mainstream hotels are losing their F&B moolah to standalone restaurants in a big way. Changing customer habits which are in sync with the casual setting of standalone restaurants, are sure to make the competition tougher, going forward. It is high time, therefore, the mainstream hotels reinvented their F&B design to stay relevant and win back the customers. **Shoaib Mohammed** attempts to understand how hotels approach this crucial issue and find solutions...

As I sat down to put together a piece on this issue, a mail from Eastin Hotel Ahmedabad came calling my attention. Quickly I realised that the content of the mail would give a kick-start to the topic I am trying to address. The Hotel has launched a Gourmet Card – Eastin Gourmet Circle - granting the members privilege of special offers and additional value adds at Eastin restaurants. The special offers and privileges that the Card guarantees are quite enticing. The membership entitles 50% discount on the bill when dining with another person at any of Eastin Hotel Ahmedabad restaurants, 33% discount when dining with the company of two, 25% discount when dining with the company of three, 20%



KAMALJIT SINGH

Resident Manager-
Ailia Diwa Goa

AJOY BALKRISHNA

General Manager, Grand Sarovar
Premiere Goregaon

PAVITHRAN NAMBIAR

General Manager,
JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu

discount when dining with a company of four, in addition to priority reservations, every time, at every restaurant. Furthermore, the guests can enjoy 15% discount on rooms and 30% discount on Spa.

A similar release from another hotel in Delhi NCR, a couple of hours later, also sounded innovative to me, at a time when hotel F&B are fast losing their sheen due to cut-throat competition from the standalone restaurants outside in the market place, hi-streets, shopping malls, etc. Although this was not as catchy as the previous one, the intention was clear. Hotels are frantic in their efforts to keep the F&B revenue and cash box ticking. Mosaic Hotel in Noida has recently started tiffin service to travellers who do not want to venture out of their rooms for food, after hectic days of business meetings. A unique customised approach has been thought up keeping in mind guest's nutrition requirements and homely food with a variety of Indian and Continental cuisines at an affordable price delivered in a guest's hotel room.

The F&B scenario in India is changing at a very fast pace. The demographic advantages together with high disposable income, rise in

number of working women, changing consumer preferences, are all driving this growth. From an occasional activity, eating out has become an occasion in itself for urban Indians. A new set of entrepreneurs with innovative dining concepts started mushrooming in every city, offering complete experiential dining which was unknown and unheard of outside the four walls of mainstream hotels a few decades ago. The easy accessibility, informal setting, value-for-money pricing, choicest of F&B offerings, all made these restaurants popular and able to pluck out a sizeable chunk of F&B customers of mainstream hotels. The resonance is felt across all segments of hotels, irrespective of the 'stardom'.

While hotels cannot do away with their F&B, the issue is how to make them profitable and sustainable. A lot of hotels have started revisiting their F&B strategies to stay relevant. Leasing out the space to well-known F&B operators, collaborating with globally renowned chefs and their signature brands, etc. are few measures in this direction. The mainstream industry is also abreast with the changing market dynamics. The regional head of a leading international hotel chain,

made the changing mindset quite clear while participating in an industry debate in the capital city, recently. He advocated strongly ‘outsourcing the hotel restaurants to those who understand the business.’

Change in outlook:

Industry experts confide to this growing competition and the need for new F&B strategies for hotels. The restaurant business is changing its definition and the standalone restaurants are making hoteliers change

“hushed pretensions” of “high level cooking” that they boast, in the changed scenario, submits Chef Sudhir Pai, Executive Chef, Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport. “Today hotels have begun to revolutionize F&B space by simply making it fun to dine in their restaurants. Restaurants have a sense of humour about the dining experience they offer and are able to engage with the diner through playful cuisine or bar offerings.”

Agreeing with Chef Pai, Suresh Madhok, Director, Empee Hotels (Hilton Chennai)

standalone restaurants. One must realize that the success of any restaurant depends on the good expression of somebody’s right vision. Restaurants fail because of bad expression of somebody’s vision,” says Subir Bhowmick, Director, GVK Group of Hotels.

Anil Bhandari, Chairman, AB Smart Concepts also did not want to be drawn into the hotel F&B v/s standalone outlets competition. “Hotels need not to look at standalone restaurants at all,” he commented. “Chefs in all hotels are inventing new dishes



SUDHIR PAI
Executive Chef, Holiday Inn Mumbai
International Airport



SUBIR BHOWMICK
Director, GVK Group of Hotels



ANIL BHANDARI
Chairman, AB Smart Concepts



SURESH MADHOK
Director, Hilton Chennai
(Empee Group)

the way they look at things, agrees Ajoy Balkrishna, General Manager, Grand Sarovar Premiere Goregaon. “The hotels are getting the showmanship back into the restaurants. Retail-style restaurant concepts are gaining popularity, and ‘Celebrity Chefs’ are brought in by some hotels,” he said.

Hotels are reinventing the product design to ward off the competition and make the loyal customers stay put with them. “F&B product design in the hotel space is largely inspired by its target customer – be it a business hotel hosting large conferences, a leisure property catering to families and hosting destination weddings or a luxury hotel catering to the customer with an affinity for the finer things in life,” observes Pavithran Nambiar, General Manager, JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu. There is also a marginal increase in non-residential clientele opting to dine at hotels, with a plethora of options from mid-scale to luxury, at their disposal. With concepts like Michelin and Celebrity Chefs making their way to the hotel dining space, the discerning customer, is keen to explore from the great variety available to him.

Even hotels are doing away with the

says that ‘contemporary and casual yet one-that-makes-an-impression’ seems to be the buzz word. F&B spaces are moving away from the conventional way of placing furniture and creating seating spaces. Restaurants too, are now focusing more on upping the levels of ‘visual appeal’ by attaching innovative themes to their decor. Creation of ‘interactive spaces’ has also emerged as a key component of intelligent space design. To achieve this, the spotlight has been on Live Kitchen Counters and Guerdots Service. “Our focal point too has been to create ways in which we could engage with our guest, he says.”

The growing competition makes it essential for hotels to “refresh” their offerings “once in a while,” informs Kamaljit Singh, Resident Manager at Alila Diwa Goa. “The alterations can be done by changing furniture, fixtures, equipment, lighting, culinary USP’s, music and kitchen layout,” he explains.

However, there are people who believe in the strengths of the mainstream hotel restaurants and do not see any need for drastic change. “I do not think it is high time mainstream Hotels changed their food & beverage design because of the growing competition from

and the focus is on plating and presentation of dishes. Service standards are improving. Wine pairing is gaining importance. Buffet offerings are more appealing, visually pleasing and decoration is being giving importance. In Patisserie, new designs of cakes and pastries with different flavours are being added along with new products like marshmallows, cookies with different flavours and taste, etc.”

Ideal design:

The market dynamics are changing thick and fast. Technology is driving the change in a big way in all sectors of economic activity. Food service business is not spared, rather it is getting more technology driven than any other business. Consumer habits are evolving and loyalty is passé. In this context, is it silly to ask what an ideal F&B product design is?

“One cannot have a fixed idea on an ideal F&B product design; It depends on the location where the hotel is situated, the type of brand and market segment, how many outlets are there in the hotel, how it will add value to the image of the hotel, etc.,” observes Chef Pai. The current trend, according to Balkrishna, is going back to traditional ways and means of

how food was served. Irani Cafe's are coming back into the realm in a fancy avatar, the old classics in French fine dining will come back again, he predicts.

"An ideal F&B product design is one that appeals, holistically to its target audience," Nambiar suggests.

Madhok thinks that the markets seem to reinvent itself and therefore the ideal F&B product design will be the one that is able to continually adapt at the same pace at which demands change. "Adaptability of visual merchandise, lighting, flatware, linen, cutlery, staff uniform, service style, menu offerings and the like must be factored in during the design conceptualisation stages of F&B spaces," he said. According to Bhandari, the hallmark of ideal F&B product design is authenticity of cuisine. "If it is Mughlai, the cuisine should be Mughlai. Bukhara and Dum Pukht are examples of authentic cuisine. If doing fusion, it should be unique, have good taste and flavour acceptable to local community. Consistency in taste, quality of service and reasonable price are other factors."

Winning back the customer base:

As consumers have multiple choices before them, it is important every player think out of the box and offer credible reasons to be a preferred dining destination for discerning customers. Hotels have to break the perception that they are expensive and at the same time formal in its setting. Agrees Balkrishna, "Hotels have to break the stigma attached to hotels that dining in hotel is expensive." Singh of Alila Diwa Goa also suggests something similar. "Hotels need to be well-versed with the newest trends of competition, and if need be break the 'Five Star branding' keeping in mind that it does not diminish the value of the product."

According to Madhok, strong unique selling points, quality products with better value for money and impeccable service will help hotels bring back business that they seem to be losing to restaurants outside.

While the quest for excellence is not negotiable for Luxury hotels, some are seeking more flexibility and showing originality in the services they offer. It is necessary to look at

the lifestyle segment to find new concepts that may be built around improved technological tools as well as sustainable development. Hotel guests are no longer the only target for restaurants that now also address customers from outside the hotel.

The idea of no-frills, high quality fast food has made its way into the hotel industry. Like it or not, Sunday dinner regulars and appetizer, main course or dessert fans are proof that eating habits are changing. Brunch, Wine & Cheese, tapas nights, are all concepts that are gaining popularity. Since eating habits are no longer relevant, some hotel groups have decided to rethink the F&B concept in order to offer guests varied innovative ideas.

"I agree that Hotels should now rethink of their food and beverage outlets which should not be just conventional but their brand should experiment to give a new look, make it inviting, warm, timeless places to celebrate the fun and joy of eating, drinking, socializing, while being committed to offer excellence of food and service," Bhowmick commented.

about hotel dining are concerned. Hotel dining is considered more of a formal activity compared to dining in a restaurant, outside. Bhandari totally agrees with this perception. "Hotel restaurants are more for formal dining places and standalones are for casual dining with friends and family. Standalone restaurants draw a different segment of the market which is families and friends. Hotel restaurants are used more for business entertainment because a host is status conscious and there is a difference in quality and services."

"The rules have become slightly more relaxed, owing to the changes in life style patterns. With the fast-paced lifestyle that dictates today's scenario, people look to primarily relax and unwind at a hotel or standalone restaurant, without having to stress too much on other factors," opines Nambiar.

The choice alters completely depending on the occasion, feels Singh. "We have observed that for certain celebrations, guests do not mind going to a five star resort, whereas for more casual dinners, standalone restaurants are what they are generally inclined to visit." ■

The formal v/s casual:

There is also a mind-block as far perceptions

With inputs from P Krishna Kumar





How to attract the Connected Traveller?

Deepesh Saxena, Territory Manager, TripAdvisor, India

When you look at planning and booking trends, it is clear that mobile usage is on the rise and a new segment of traveller is emerging – the Connected Traveller. The Connected Traveller presents a tremendous opportunity for the hotel sector, but first, owners need to know a bit more about the particular habits and needs of this growing segment of potential guests.

The latest TripBarometer report from TripAdvisor delves into the behaviour of travellers who have used a smartphone to plan or book travel, representing 42 percent of the total TripBarometer respondents. The report reveals how these Connected Travellers use their smartphones before and during a trip, provides insight into the types of amenities and services this segment of travellers expects their accommodation of choice to offer, and shows how the hotel industry is responding.

Introducing the Connected Traveller

Connected Travellers, defined as those who use their smartphone to plan or book travel. Connected Travellers are found around the world but are more prominent in certain regions. South America has the highest proportion of Connected Travellers with 57 percent of TripBarometer respondents from the region falling into the Connected Traveller segment. The Middle East (55%) and Asia (49%) follow close behind. However, looking at individual countries, Thailand and China lead the trend, with 65 percent of Thai and Chinese TripBarometer respondents identified as Connected Travellers. While European and North American countries lag slightly behind, a large proportion of the TripBarometer

respondent base from these countries are Connected Travellers – for example in, South America 57%, The Middle East 55%, Asia 49% in and in India 47% of travellers fall into the Connected Traveller group.

Disrupting the traditional booking patterns

Alongside online travel agents, hotel websites and other travel sites, mobile apps are becoming increasingly popular as a booking channel, with the amount of people using a mobile app to book their accommodation doubling year over year. In 2014, four percent of TripBarometer respondents booked the accommodation for their last trip using a mobile app – that proportion has risen to eight percent this year. For Connected Travellers, this increases to 11 percent. Perhaps more importantly, the report reveals that those who booked via a mobile are habitual users, with one in four (24%) saying they usually book via this channel.

Smartphone: the essential trip companion

The way Connected Travellers use their smartphones while on their trip is what really sets Connected Travellers apart. The smartphone becomes their essential travel companion – they bring their smartphone with them in order to organise their trip more efficiently (44%) and even to book accommodation on the go (37%). According to the report, 72 percent of Connected Travellers use their mobile to look for restaurants, 67 percent use it to find things to do and 64 percent use it to read reviews.

The opportunities for the hospitality industry are clear – Connected Travellers are still looking for inspiration and information even once they are already in their destination, thanks to their smartphone. Whether it's to choose where they will eat that evening or what activity they might want to do in the afternoon, local hospitality businesses should be finding ways to make themselves as attractive as possible to

the Connected Traveller audience.

What do the Connected Traveller want – and what are hotels offering?

It's no secret that all travellers find it useful for their hotel to offer power adaptors or converters to save them from having to bring their own. Two thirds (64%) of Connected Travellers would welcome this type of offering and almost half of the surveyed hoteliers already offer some form of the service. Nearly half (45%) of all Connected Travellers would enjoy an app to book things through while on their trip, and yet only one in six hoteliers (16%) globally currently offer this option.

Over a third of Connected Travellers say they would like for a hotel to make SIM cards or temporary mobile phones available for its guests, but only 7 percent of hotels currently offer this service.

Ready for the Connected Traveller – how well is India prepared?

Globally, hoteliers have become far more accessible via a number of different platforms with 73 percent of hotels worldwide taking online bookings and 55 percent accepting bookings via a mobile device. So far, just 11 percent offer mobile check-in.

According to the businesses surveyed in the TripBarometer study, Indian hoteliers are quickly catching up to the global average in terms of making themselves accessible to Connected Travellers, with 69 percent of properties accepting online bookings, falling short of the global average by just four percent. India is also prioritising its technical capabilities in terms of offering a mobile app for booking, with 19 percent of properties offering this service, trialling the global average by a mere one percent.

The hospitality sector has a huge opportunity ahead of them to attract a growing segment of Connected Travellers, for whom smartphones are fast becoming their go-to planning and booking device. ■

‘We ensure the entire hotel is improved rather than just a few rooms’

While the number of online inventory consolidators are growing by the day in the by and large unorganized budget hotel segment in India, ZiP Rooms, promoted by **Keshav Baljee** claims to have an advantage over others who are mere technology companies because of his hotel pedigree. In an interaction with **P Krishna Kumar**, he tries to establish the brand identity and growth plans of ZiP Rooms

Q There is a whole buzz around converting unbranded hotels and guest houses into branded inventory and selling it online. Eg. Oyo, Zo, ZiP Rooms, etc. What according to you is driving this new trend? How is it going to change the economy/budget hospitality landscape in India?

Getting people to book hotel rooms online is a three pronged problem : one must be able to discover the hotel online, trust the site and hotel offering, and be able to pay easily. The first problem was solved by the OTA's - they have put up over 4 lac hotel rooms online in the country now. I still believe that is only 40% of the total inventory available, and that is when you don't include non standard inventory. The second problem is of trust and promise of quality - this is where the OTA's wash their hands off - they are booking agents only, and take no responsibility for the quality of the experience at the hotel. ZiP Rooms on the other hand takes responsibility for the quality of the hotel experience - providing 100% quality assurance for the guests and this is critical in the budget hotel industry where quality is patchy. We also spend a lot of time judiciously choosing hotels, and standardising them. Finally, the last problem is one that is being solved by the mass availability of the internet through smartphones, and of alternate payment models like wallets or pay-at-hotel models.

Since aggregators like ZiP Rooms have solved all three problems, we are growing rapidly and scaling fast. We believe it will be a landmark moment for the hospitality

industry in India as the budget traveller will get a standardised offering at a very Indian cost of Rs 999-1500.

Q When was ZiP Rooms launched and what is the concept, and how is it different other online consolidators?

As you know, Spree Hospitality was launched in 2011 and we have been in the business of managing hotels across India. We are using our experience in the management of hotels to standardise and aggregate hotels. We are the only company from the hospitality industry, with a hospitality pedigree (I am also the co-promoter of Royal Orchid Hotels), that is in this space. As such, we are a more natural partner for the hotel owners across the country. We understand what they go through on a daily basis - we have gone through all of this for years!

We are partners of hotels - not purchasers of their inventory. We believe that buying inventory doesn't solve the problem of inconsistent quality. The only way to truly have a great partnership, and a successful product, is to ensure the hotel owner can deliver great quality in a profitable and sustainable manner. This is where ZiP Rooms comes in - we use our operational expertise to give the hotel owner the power of a chain. We are a platform for hotel owners - not just a booking site . We can help hotel owners save costs, operate more efficiently, and also earn more revenue! This explains why we have grown to over 40 hotels in less than three months of starting our brand - without offering any hotel any pre-purchase models.



Q How many properties have you been able to sign so far and what is the geographical spread? How do you plan to take it forward?

We have 40 hotels, 1500 rooms in 15 cities across India. And we are just starting out. We plan to be in 100 + cities, with over 10,000 rooms in 12 months. We invite hotel owners and particularly regional chains to partner with us to mutually benefit in this growth and chain scale!

Q A major criticism against these start up consolidators is that these brand owners lack proper control on the inventory and other deliverables which are critical for experiential hospitality? What is your take on this?

Absolutely agree with this! As we are from the hospitality industry we have built a complete platform to take care of the entire hotel - not just rooms. For instance, we also help our hotel partners with F&B requirements. We ensure the entire hotel is improved rather than just a few rooms. We believe the entire experience must be improved. We also focus on service and not just product. The winner in our category will be the one who is the 'Indigo Airlines' of this space - the reliable, rock solid one. We hope to be that player!

We have a strong technology product and shall shortly be releasing some great apps for the benefit of the hospitality industry. We hope to be the game changer the hotel industry has been waiting for! ■

Big Data: A Game changer

Nanak Banerjee, Practice Lead, CRM Analytics, Travel, Leisure & Hospitality, Absolutdata



For hospitality industry, Big Data has the potential to become a game changer. Today a lot of players in this space are struggling to increase customer loyalty, customer engagement, convert bookings from Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) to direct channel, increase incidental revenue per customer. For all of the above challenges, there is data, tools, techniques and solutions available to solve them. The challenge is to identify the right approach that will work and will be easily adapted across departments. A lot of key players have moved in early to build big data capabilities but are still struggling to use big data in the right way to solve for their key challenges.

Following are a couple of key challenges that can be solved effectively by using big data:

Increase customer engagement:

Big data allows companies to capture and integrate customer level data across multiple platforms like social media, mobile, customer feedback, past transaction, customer level preferences, etc. to create a 360 view of customer. This customer 360 data can be used for generating powerful customer level insights which can then be used for personalized targeting at a customer level based on their propensity to respond to a particular offer / campaign. Advanced big data techniques help in identifying the right offer, right channel, and the right customer. This leads to a huge increase in customer engagement, customer spend, customer loyalty. For example, Mr. Sam is planning for his next vacation and is searching for possible destinations at a beach resort in

US. He is going through various reviews, comments on the social media. He has also searched for possible offers at various OTA and large hotel chains. During his previous leisure stays at brand A, he has stayed in properties with golf facilities and has preferred beach facing rooms. During his previous stays he had asked for sightseeing facilities of the property. Now using this insight, if brand A targets Mr. Sam with offers in resort properties (having golf) in Miami, Hawaii it will make the offering



relevant to his need. Also during his visit, if the property proactively offers a sea facing room and suggests sight-seeing options it will definitely delight him

Improve brand perception:

Companies are investing in exhaustive market research exercises to measure consumer perception. Unsolicited customer feedback is freely available across various social platforms which if mined can help map strong and weak areas for self and competition. Big data allows companies to use social media analytics to help in identifying brand perceptions through application of machine learning techniques like

contextual discovery, semantic profiling, natural language processing, regionalism variation detection, sentiment analysis, etc on unstructured data. This helps in identifying areas of opportunities to focus on for improving brand perception.

Improve customer conversion:

Customers generally leave a digital trail of their online whereabouts which can help refine path to purchase and also help a brand identify the phase in which a customer falls during the purchase journey (research, compare, recommend, purchase etc.). Big data helps decode complex digital trails which can help predict future customer action. Based on this understanding, brands can push relevant content and administer marketing actions in order to maximize the likelihood of a customer moving into the next phase of the journey. This helps improve ROI on marketing spends.

Hospitality industry has always focused on world class service to build a loyal customer base. Big data capabilities can add the element of in-premises and off-premises personalization in the experience that a brand offers to the customer. A time will come when the hotel front staff will be guided by a "Sir" like voice assistant proposing personal customer level actions to improve guest experience. ■



‘Quality would be long remembered when the price is forgotten’

With its brand ethos embedded in ‘Responsible Luxury’, ITC Gardenia, Bengaluru, the largest LEED Platinum rated Green Hotel in the country, has been able to become an abode for indulgent and aspirational travellers. **Disha Shah Ghosh** talks to **Virender Razdan**, Area Manager, ITC Hotels Bengaluru & General Manager, ITC Gardenia, to know how the hotel has been able to lead and command the hotel landscape of the city since it started operations....

Q Bengaluru, over the years, has become the hot bed of luxury hospitality. What kind of difference did ITC Gardenia bring into the hospitality landscape of the IT city?

The travel & tourism industry is growing at an unbelievable pace, and has an equally competitive environment. Quality would be long remembered when the price is forgotten. Luxury comes with a new look at ITC Gardenia. The hotel is located in the midst of Bengaluru’s most elite neighbourhood and has become an abode for the indulgent and the aspirational. ITC Gardenia was conferred the highest rating for green buildings in the world - the LEED India Platinum Rating. At the time, it was the largest LEED Platinum Rated Green Hotel – the first to achieve such recognition. Since then we have set new benchmarks for the industry and we constantly work on raising the bar. Built on the ethos of ‘Responsible Luxury’ where Luxury is the motivator but is provided in a way that doesn’t harm the environment.

Q As per statistics, the number of hotel rooms has more than quadrupled in the last four to five years in Bengaluru. How has this supply-increase affected the demand?

Bengaluru inventory has indeed quadrupled, however, this increase in inventory has got uniformly divided into three sub-markets and in each market the overall increase is 25% to 30%. The good news is that with the right price correction, now there is a healthy growth in demand.

Q IT industry was the main stay of hotel businesses in the city for many years? How is it changing and what are the opportunities?

Bengaluru is the fastest growing city in India,

and though this may have been triggered by the IT Industry, ITES and start-up companies are the feeder industries for our kind of business and will stay like this for the next few years.

Q As a luxury collection brand, what is the kind of occupancies and ADR’s that the hotel has been able to command in the market?

As a Luxury Collection Brand of Starwood backed by an icon called ITC, we have a strong distribution network on the national level as well as internationally. With this kind of a strong network we have been able to earn premium ADR’s and growth in our occupancies.

Q Bengaluru being a business hub offers unlimited opportunities for MICE. What is your product design to cater to this segment & how is it contributing to your overall business?

The potential for growth in the MICE market in Bengaluru is very high, yet it is not being fully harnessed. We have barely begun to scratch the surface. Whether domestic or international, there is a rapid growth in the hotel and MICE Industry which is fuelled by the country’s efforts to boost tourism and corporate travel. The trend in Bengaluru has always been towards an unconventional style, with MICE, green meetings and ‘being organic’, picking up pace, which, in fact, is ITC Gardenia’s core philosophy.

Q ITC Gardenia is a hotel with highest Green Certification – LEEDS Platinum. How has the hotel been able to cash in on this ‘Green’ quotient?

With the astonishing development that has been witnessed globally, there is a need to move towards a more sustainable method of achieving

growth. This has been recognised by ITC Hotels well before and therefore has ensured that the hotels in the Luxury Collection have all been LEED Platinum rated, whether new or existing category. ITC Gardenia was the first in India to be conferred with this status and at the time was the largest to achieve the same. The hotel utilizes 100% renewable Wind Energy for its entire operations and the lights in the hotel are all CFC, LED and other energy efficient light fittings. In fact, the architectural design of the hotel is such that all rooms get natural lighting thus reducing energy consumption during daytime. More businesses are actively associating themselves with ITC Gardenia as it is built on the ethos of “Responsible Luxury” and has adopted contemporary ‘Green Practices’ that harness the element of nature in an inspired setting to deliver unique guest experiences.

Q Considering the growing competition, hotel stakeholders are hard pressed to contain their distribution cost by leveraging new age technological and communication tools. How are you revisiting your marketing and distribution strategy?

The industry is a very competitive one, and in order to succeed, you must keep trying new marketing plans to retain existing customers and to get the attention of prospective customers. Hotels have a perpetual need to get new businesses, have their conference rooms booked and keep an eagle eye for the next big gathering that will help add more profit to the bottom line. Developing new marketing and promotion ideas is critical to the success of any hotel and therefore, innovating business strategies is an ongoing process and will continue to be so. ■



Hotels need to adopt ceasefire on price war or face doom

Anil Bhandari, Chairman, AB Smart Concepts

Indian Tourism is thriving. The number of international and domestic tourists is proliferating. Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) during the month of July 2015 were 0.63 million as compared to FTAs of 0.56 million in the same period in 2014, marking a growth of 11.3%. In the year 2014 FTAs were 7.46 million marking a growth of 7.1% as compared to FTAs of 6.96 million in 2013.

There has been a substantial growth in the number of Domestic Tourist Visits (DTV), with 1145 million DTVs in 2013, a 9.6% growth rate over 2012. As per the 12th Five-year Plan Tourism is expected to grow 12% per annum.

Then why is the Hotel industry said to be in recession? The private sector is not investing in development of hotels because of the high cost of land as well as non-availability of approved land in most cities and around places of tourist interest. Commercial land needs to be converted for hotel construction which is time-consuming and costly. Other reasons are restrictive building norms/byelaws, long procedures and multiple clearances. In addition, the hotels are waging a price war and under-selling.

Most big real estate developers like DLF, Unitech, Parsvnath, Ansals, Hiranandani and others have decided not to build hotels. The main reason is that they are not getting the return on investments as was earlier projected.

Many hotels in Aerocity and NCR such as MGM, Hyatt, Novotel and Pullman have not completed their projects. However, India is on the threshold of an economical revival as she ranks 7th globally in terms of GDP

at current prices and is expected to grow at 7.5% in 2016.

With its bold initiatives the NDA Government has taken significant steps in improving the economy. The gross domestic product (GDP) is INR106.4 trillion, a growth rate of 7.3% as against INR 99.21 trillion in 2013-14.

Economic activities which witnessed significant growth were 'financing, insurance, real estate and business services' at 11.5% and hotels, trade, transport, communication services at 10.7%.

To achieve the Ministry of Tourism's vision of 11 million FTAs by 2017, that is 1% of the world's tourism share, initiatives such as the INR 500-crore HRIDAY (Heritage Development and Augmentation Yojana) for 12 cities have been launched, besides a few more such schemes. Stakeholders are keenly awaiting the National Tourism Policy 2015 which offers additional 'tourism products' and a definite roadmap to achieve that target.

Given the fact that the NDA Government considers Tourism as a key focus area for the country's development, hoteliers anticipate other initiatives to include the long-awaited infrastructure status, incentives to develop tourist destinations and expansion of the recent extension of electronic visa on arrival scheme to people from 77 countries to 150 countries.

During January-May 2015, a total of 1,10,657 tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 9,841 during the same period in 2014, registering a growth of 1024.4%. The growth was due to introduction of e-Tourist Visa for 76 countries as against the earlier TVoA scheme for 43 countries.

An increase in the number of foreign and domestic tourists has led to a rate war, a competition in the Hotel industry. Inevitably, in a bid to gain business this has resulted in a decline in average room rates (ARR). Presently a 5-star hotel room is being sold at INR4,500-5,000 and a 5-star deluxe hotel room from

INR10,000-15,000, the rate difference between the two being 50%.

Hotels have dropped rates and taken loss-making decisions in an attempt to gain business. The rate war has led to hotels, even globally recognized brands, providing freebies like free transportation from airport, wi-fi, breakfast, complimentary bottle of water, wine, welcome drink, etc. The losses could be curbed if such freebies were stopped.

It is heartening to note that many hotels in Delhi and Gurgaon have occupancy of 65% and above. But on the other hand, ARR for hotels in Aerocity, Dwarka and Gurgaon for 5-star deluxe hotels is INR7,000-8,000 and 5-star hotels INR3,750-4,500. It is high time 5-star hotels end the war on prices and increase their rates to at least minimum INR 6,000 which will be 40% less than the 5-star deluxe hotels.

Another department where hotels continue to offer discounted rates and undergo losses is the Banquets division. Five-star deluxe and 5-star hotels either do not charge for rental, or even if they do, charge negligibly. Even the food charges are modest, ranging from INR2,500 to INR 4,500.

On the other hand, private caterers organize banquets, especially weddings, with tented, air-conditioned halls, and charge rentals of INR32 lakh and more, while farm houses charge rentals from INR5 lakh onwards. In addition, they charge separately for food and a good quality menu can cost INR3,500 to INR4,000 per head. It is time that 5-star and 5-star deluxe hotels increase their Banquet rates.

Hotels resorting to charging less, offering freebies and giving discounts in order to gain clientele does not spell good business in the long run. Most of the newly-built hotels are facing financial problems as they are unable to pay the interest and principal loan amount resulting in banks taking over the properties. It is time the price war is stopped or else they will be heading towards their doom. ■

Hyatt

Sourav Rakshit, Assistant Director, Food & Beverage Hyatt Regency Chennai

Rakshit started his career with Hyatt Regency Kolkata in 2002 where he managed most of the outlets in the property. His core responsibilities at Hyatt Raipur were, ensuring the F&B activities are aligned with the respective corporate strategies, ensuring all employees deliver the brand promise and provide exceptional guest service at all times, analyzing business performance strategically to facilitate, accurate and meaningful forecasting.

At Hyatt Regency Chennai, he will be expected to encourage employees to be creative and innovative and challenge and recognize them for their contribution to the success of the operation. He will also be expected to keep himself abreast of the hotel guest feedback, views and ensure that each profit centre is operated in line with maximizing profit while delivering on the brand promise.

Sourav holds a BSC degree from Calcutta University and a hotel management degree from IHM CT & AN and believes his strength are - team building, communication, inventory management, budgeting, business development, product enhancement, guest satisfaction to name a few.


Wei Zheng, Chef de Cuisine at Stix Hyatt Regency Chennai

At 26 years old, Zheng has already gathered an extensive amount of experience in the Sichuan Chinese cuisine. He started working in 2005 at Xinjiang Spring restaurant, after which he joined Xin Rong restaurant in 2008 as a Chef de Partie. Eventually, he moved on to working with Sixty-Two

Flavour restaurant management company in Beijing.

Chef Wei holds an intermediate work experience after graduating from University One, specializing in Sichuan style of cooking. He believes his strengths are, core team relations, hardworking, ultimate guest satisfaction and sense of service. At Hyatt Regency Chennai, he will be overlooking the culinary operations in Stix and deliver the best to help position Stix as one of the best Chinese cuisine destinations in Chennai.

InterContinental Hotel Group

Padma Prasad, Talent Development Manager, Crowne Plaza, Bengaluru

A seasoned hotelier, Prasad has over two decades of experience in the industry and has worked for international hospitality groups such as Taj Hotels, Radisson Blu, A&W Fast foods (Doha) & Professor (HOD) in S L College of HM & CS Mr. Prasad is a Green Belt holder in Six Sigma Certifications &

Internal auditor for ISO: 22000. He has successfully supported and contributed to Crowne Plaza Kochi in Quality & Training needs since August 2012 and will continue providing the quality and training needs for the Bengaluru property.

His footprint in different cities of the country has not only improved his management skills to meet international standards, but also has taught him to respect and gain an understanding on training trends and quality control in operations to drive results.


Thomas Joseph, Executive Chef, Crowne Plaza, Bengaluru

Chef Joseph brings with him over 18 years of culinary experience in the industry. Known for his eye for detail and innovation, he has always surpassed guests' expectations when it comes to food. His forte is bringing together local flavours with an innovative twist. He has worked with acclaimed international chains such as Leela Kempinski, Intercontinental, Hilton, The Taj Residency, JW

Marriott, Movenpick Hotels & Resorts and Novotel Hotel to name a few. Additionally, he is a certified internal auditor for ISO- 22000.

In his role he will be responsible for overseeing all of the hotel's dining venues, catering and culinary events, managing the kitchen staff, all food service operations, planning of the menu and order supplies etc.

When he is not working, he prefers to go on long drives and enjoys watching movies in different languages.


Ashis Rout, Executive Chef, InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort

Rout will oversee all culinary activities at the InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort, which will open in October 2015 and will be responsible for three highly distinctive restaurants. Rout plans on introducing a new private dining concept 'Dine by Design'.

Rout started his career with The Hyatt in Kolkata. He was also responsible for developing and revamping the culinary concept at Ananda-InThe Himalayas. He has fifteen years of experience in the F&B field, displaying an innovative and contemporary approach. Having worked at the Park Hyatt in Milan and at The Grand in Bangkok, his cuisine reflects the various cultures which influenced his creative approach to cooking over the years.

Aloft Bengaluru

Chef Sandeep Kumar, Executive Sous Chef, Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park

Chef Kumar, is a seasoned chef with over 10 years of experience serving in various hospitality, food and beverage positions around the globe. He holds a prestigious degree from the Subhash Bose Institute of Hotel Management, Kolkata. Kumar started his

career in 2003 as a Training Chef de Partie with The Leela Goa, later working with the Carnival Cruise Line, with a menu crafted by Georges Blanc, a French Chef and Restaurateur, with three Michelin stars and four toques from the guide Gault et Millau. His next appointments were at The Orient Express at The Taj Palace, Delhi and finally, the Starwood bandwagon in 2010, as the Chef in charge of the then pre-opening Westin before the present appointment.

Marriott Whitefield

Chef Marou, Italian Chef, Alto Vino, Bengaluru Marriott Whitefield

Chef Marou comes with an extensive experience of 13 years in the industry and is an expert of Italian Cooking. He started his career in 2003 as a trainee at Antica Locanda Postporta, a restaurant in the city of Gallarate. He worked at a couple of restaurants in Italy as trainee chef and head chef before joining Grand Hyatt, Muscat as the Sous Italian Chef in 2011.

At Bengaluru Marriott Hotel, Whitefield his role would be to head the Italian Restaurant Alto Vino and look after the smooth kitchen operations. He would also be responsible to ensure maximum guest satisfaction and maintaining the international Marriott standards. His job will also be to look after the storage and careful use of equipment.

Chef has finished his Vocational training from 'Formot' for restaurant Manager in Italy along with a qualification on Swedish and Scandinavian kitchen from Umea University School of Restaurant and Culinary Art in Sweden.

To feature in the
 appointment section,
 write to: admin@sihra.in

SIHRA SnapShot



Tamilnadu Tourism – FICCI Conference in Chennai:

As a prelude to the Global Investors' Meet in September, FICCI along with Tamilnadu Tourism organized a day-long conference on Tourism Opportunities in the State on August 26, 2015 at Hotel Le Royal Meridien, Chennai. Dr Kannan, Additional Chief Secretary, Tamil Nadu gave key note address followed by a presentation by Har Sahay Meena, Commissioner – Tourism, Tamil Nadu highlighting undiscovered places as well as challenges and opportunities for tourism in the state. P.Murari, Advisor to President FICCI spoke on the initiative taken in promoting tourism as a prelude for the Global Investors meet to be held in September, 2015.

R.Rangachari, Advisor, SIHRA was invited to moderate the session on Stakeholders meet with a panel of speakers. The panel included A.Ariff of Praveen Travels, Dr Anthony Ashok Kumar of SRM Institute of Catering Management and Ashoka, President, Tourist Guides Federation.



Unique Guinness World Record

Hotel Daspalla, Hyderabad, prepared the lengthiest Dosa ever to get into the Guinness World Record. 25 Chefs from the hotel led by the Executive Chef, Mahendra Tripathi under the command of Vijay Tenneti, General Manager of the Hotel prepared a 54 feet long Dosa weighing 13.68 kg. The Dosa served to more than 200 children and guest. The Hot Plate used for Dosa was donated as material for the Statue of Unity dedicated to Sardar Patel.



World Tourism Day Celebrations:

The travel and tourism industry of Chennai city came together to celebrate the World Tourism Day in the Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) Chennai premises on September 25. At the aegis of Tamil Nadu Tourism, IATO Chennai, TAAI Chennai, SIHRA – Chennai, and IHM Chennai participated in the celebration and awareness march along Marina Beach announcing the message of the World Tourism Day 2015 – 1 Billion Tourists, 1 Billion Opportunities.



Kerala Tourism presents a culture feast to Londoners

The famed Trafalgar Square reverberated with the beats of 'chenda' and movements of 'Kathakali' performers as 'God's Own Country' captured the hearts of visitors to the 'Mayor of London' event in the British capital. More than 50,000 people thronged the London landmark witnessed traditional music, dance and martial arts performances organised by Kerala Tourism on October 11.



SIHRA NEWS

South India Hotels and Restaurants Association
In the Service of the Hospitality Industry since 1951

South India Hotels & Restaurants Association (SIHRA), incorporated in 1951 with an objective to encourage, promote and protect the interests of member establishments, constitutes the southern region of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), the apex trade association for the Hospitality Industry in India. SIHRA's Membership comprises the smallest Restaurants to the Five Star deluxe Hotels in the Southern States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana and Tamil Nadu and the Union Territories of Puducherry and Lakshadweep.

The following State Associations are members of SIHRA:

- The Tamil Nadu Hotels Association, Chennai
- The Karnataka Pradesh Hotels & Restaurants Association, Bangalore
- The Kerala Hotel & Restaurant Association, Kochi
- The Andhra Pradesh Hotels Association, Tirupati
- The Hotel Association of Puducherry , Puducherry
- The Telangana State Hotels Association , Hyderabad

Currently 1,500 copies of the magazine will be circulated to Owners, Directors, CEOs, COOs, HODs and other Senior Executives, Leading Professionals and decision makers of the hospitality industry in the region. We believe this association will link the industry, its leaders both in the Private and Public Sector and our members, providing business critical information.

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