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Sebi Orders Suspension of Embassy REIT's CEO Amid Allegations of Negligence in Financial Reporting

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

In a major regulatory action, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has directed Embassy Office Parks Management Services Pvt Ltd to suspend Aravind Maiya as its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and appoint an interim CEO immediately. Embassy Office Parks Management Services oversees the operations of Embassy REIT, India's first publicly listed real estate investment trust with a portfolio spanning 51.1 million square feet. The Embassy REIT portfolio also includes four operational business hotels Hilton at Embassy GolfLinks, Hilton Garden Inn at Embassy Manyata, Hilton & Hilton Garden Inn, Four Seasons at Embassy One, and two additional hotels currently under construction.

The order, issued by Sebi on Monday, November 4, cites Maiya's recent debarment by the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) over "serious lapses" in his role as an engagement partner for the statutory auditor

of Coffee Day Enterprises Ltd (CDEL). Sebi's ruling underscores Maiya's alleged gross negligence, which it claims contributed to securities market fraud at CDEL.

Sebi's interim order states, "Mr. Aravind Maiya thoroughly failed the listed company (CDEL), users of its financial statements, standards of his profession as well as public interest, by failing to audit and report a fraud which was evident in all the financial information he was supposed to vet." The order further criticized Maiya's professional conduct, describing it as a breach of fiduciary duty and a failure to meet the "fit and proper" standards required of investment firm leaders.

This decision follows NFRA's findings in August, which outlined alleged lapses in CDEL's 2018-19 financial reports, implicating Maiya and others. Though Maiya has appealed the NFRA ruling, Sebi emphasized that these findings suggest a failure to act in the public's interest, with repercussions for ordinary investors.



Sebi also took aim at Embassy REIT management, stating that despite "numerous emails, meetings, and specific instructions," the company resisted the suspension of Maiya. In response to Sebi's directive, Embassy REIT is required to appoint an interim CEO to assume leadership responsibilities without delay. ■

ITC Consolidates Stake in Oberoi and Leela Brands Amidst Hotel Business Demerger

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

ITC Ltd., currently undergoing the demerger of its hotel business, announced on Thursday that its board has approved consolidating its shareholding in two key rival hospitality brands, Oberoi and Leela. ITC will acquire shares held by its wholly-owned subsidiary, Russell Credit Ltd (RCL), to strengthen its investments in these chains.

In a regulatory filing, ITC revealed plans to acquire 1.52 crore shares of EIHL Ltd (the parent company of Oberoi and Trident) and 34.60 lakh shares of HLV Ltd



(operator of Leela Hotels) from RCL at book value. This acquisition will increase ITC's total shareholding to 16.13% in EIHL and 8.11% in HLV. Additionally, ITC's board has approved the acquisition of Greenacre Holdings Ltd, an unlisted subsidiary of RCL, at book value. These acquisitions are subject to the necessary approvals from RCL's board.

This strategic move aligns with ITC's broader plan to establish ITC Hotels Ltd, a new entity set to operate over 140 properties under six brands, including ITC Hotels, Welcomhotel, and Fortune, with the demerger receiving shareholder approval in June 2024. ■

Tourism Ministry Launches Free 'Paryatan Mitra' Training for Hotel Staff to Boost Hospitality Standards in Mysuru

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

In a push to elevate tourism standards, the Ministry of Tourism's 'Paryatan Mitra' and 'Paryatan Didi' initiative launched a two-day training program in Mysuru, inaugurated by D. Venkatesan, Regional Director of Tourism (South). The program, attended by Joint Director of Tourism M.K. Savita and Hotel Owners' Association President Narayana Gowda, provides free training to hotel staff on enhancing service quality, cleanliness, and effective tourist engagement. Aimed at fostering a positive tourist experience, the initiative underscores the importance of hospitality, sustainability, and safety in the industry. ■



Ratan Tata 1937-2024

The hospitality industry has lost a pioneer

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The world has bid farewell to Ratan Tata, the revered industrialist and philanthropist who transformed India's business landscape, including the country's luxury hospitality sector. Known for his visionary leadership, humility, and unwavering commitment to community welfare, Tata, 86, passed away peacefully, leaving behind an indelible legacy in multiple industries, especially in hospitality through the Tata Group's Taj Hotels.

As Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons, Ratan Tata oversaw one of India's most prestigious hotel brands, Taj Hotels, a name synonymous with luxury, heritage, and world-class hospitality.

His contributions to the Taj brand went beyond mere leadership; he embedded a deep-rooted ethos of service, resilience, and quality in its operations. During his tenure, Tata expanded the Taj portfolio globally, bringing Indian hospitality to an international stage, all while preserving its core identity of warmth and cultural heritage. The legendary Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai, India's first luxury hotel, stands as a testament to his commitment to hospitality and excellence.

His legacy is equally defined by his humanity. During the tragic 2008 terrorist attacks on the Taj Mahal Palace, Ratan Tata displayed remarkable resilience and solidarity with his staff and the city of Mumbai. Refusing to remain a distant figure during the

crisis, he visited the site immediately, quietly standing among the teams that worked tirelessly to bring solace to those affected. He reportedly waited three days outside the hotel during the siege, epitomizing the humility and integrity that marked his life.

Under his leadership, Tata went to extraordinary lengths to care for employees affected by the attack and to ensure the preservation of the hotel's heritage. The reopening of the Taj Mahal Palace, following the attacks, symbolised not only the resilience of the city but also Tata's unshakable belief in hospitality as a force for community and healing.

The hospitality industry has lost a pioneer, but his legacy will live on in every corner of the Tata empire. ■



'Shangri-La Group Taps into Indian Wedding Market with 'Bandhan by Shangri-La'

The Shangri-La Group is solidifying its presence in the luxury wedding and events market in India and the wider Middle East, Europe, India, and Africa (MEIA) region through its innovative service, "Bandhan by Shangri-La." Launched on October 23 at Shangri-La Eros New Delhi, Bandhan by Shangri-La aims to offer bespoke, culturally enriched wedding experiences that merge tradition with luxury. **Chris McFall, Vice President of Sales for the MEIA region at Shangri-La Group**, shared insights into the brand's expanded focus on high-end weddings and corporate events.

Q With the growing focus on MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) across global markets, how is Shangri-La positioning itself to capture a larger share of this segment, especially with its iconic properties in the region?

Shangri-La leverages its expertise in luxury hospitality and prime locations in major cities like New Delhi and Bengaluru. Its properties are designed to cater to MICE events, with versatile spaces and state-of-the-art amenities, capitalizing on the global demand for high-quality venues for corporate gatherings.

Q The recently transformed Ballroom at Shangri-La Eros New Delhi is a significant investment. What was the primary inspiration behind this renovation, and how do you see it enhancing not only weddings but also corporate events and MICE business?

The official launch of the ballroom, along with our new wedding service Bandhan by Shangri-La, took place on October 23rd at Shangri-La Eros New Delhi in our newly refurbished ballroom. The ballroom has undergone extensive renovations, featuring state-of-the-art sound and lighting capabilities, offering a modern and luxurious setting. The renovation reflects Shangri-La's commitment to luxury and versatility, catering to both grand weddings and corporate events. The space is designed to accommodate a variety of events, from intimate gatherings to large-scale conferences.

Q How does Shangri-La integrate sustainable practices into opulent weddings and large events, particularly through 'Bandhan by Shangri-La'?

Shangri-La incorporates sustainability by promoting eco-friendly decor, digital invitations, and minimizing waste during weddings. Bandhan by Shangri-La emphasizes sustainable luxury, combining grandeur with mindful practices to ensure events are both lavish and environmentally responsible.

Q 'Bandhan by Shangri-La' is present across New Delhi, Bangalore, Istanbul, Muscat, and Sri Lanka. Are there plans for expansion into new markets? If so, which destinations do you foresee as the next potential hubs for this bespoke wedding service?

Expansion plans are already in motion, with destinations like Paris,

London, and other key cities being considered as the next potential hubs. These locations have been strategically selected to cater to the growing Indian diaspora, who often seek luxurious and culturally relevant wedding venues abroad. Additionally, Southeast Asia is a focus, particularly cities with vibrant Indian communities, where there is a demand for high-end wedding venues that blend tradition with modern luxury. Shangri-La aims to extend its reach to destinations with unique cultural settings, offering couples diverse choices for their dream weddings while maintaining the personalized service they expect.

Q How do you plan to leverage strategic partnerships with local wedding planners, decorators, and vendors to further elevate the brand's offering?

Bandhan by Shangri-La collaborates closely with local wedding planners, decorators, and vendors to deliver culturally authentic and luxurious weddings that meet each couple's unique expectations. These partnerships allow Shangri-La to blend local expertise with the brand's commitment to excellence. Local planners provide insights into regional preferences, ensuring each wedding reflects cultural traditions and local aesthetics while being elevated by Shangri-La's high standards. From decor that showcases regional artistry to vendors providing traditional music, floral arrangements, and attire, these collaborations play a crucial role in offering an experience that feels exclusive, intimate, and genuinely reflective of the couple's heritage.

Q What are the primary challenges Shangri-La faces in maintaining its leadership position in the luxury wedding and event market, particularly in the MEIA region?

At Shangri-La, we embrace the dynamic nature of the luxury wedding and event market in the MEIA region by continuously refining our services and staying ahead of evolving trends. The competitive landscape, with both domestic and international brands, motivates us to consistently elevate our offerings. Our unwavering focus on delivering world-class service, anticipating and adapting to changing client expectations, and integrating sustainability into our luxury experiences not only helps us maintain our leadership but also allows us to set new standards of excellence in the industry. ■

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#inevitableINDIA

Hospitality in India has been thriving and has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors, offering unmatched opportunities for growth, innovation and having a positive economic impact. A sector that no longer can be ignored. Recently concluded FHRAI Convention focusing on ‘Tourism @2047: Incredible to Inevitable India – Driving Growth and Sustainability in a Mission Mode’ saw an unprecedented attendance of hospitality leaders



from across the country deliberating challenges, trends, and opportunities, along with government officials. Conventions within this industry, like the FHRAI Convention and other gathering of professionals – be it regional chefs, procurement heads, housekeeping professionals, and others verticals within the industry are crucial in driving collaboration, innovation, and resilience.

While there has been an unprecedented push of collaboration amongst the industry professionals to join hands for such collaborative gatherings, there is an express need of looking at the outcome from such congregations. Is it only a platform for the show of strength, or is there an ultimate motive to create a beneficial environment for the members concerned? There are many who are a part of such gathering, either to just mark their attendance – under duress, or to give themselves a chance to explore new horizons. We hope that the later is true and they are able to add value to their business.

This issue of Hospitality Biz focuses on the mega convention of hospitality professionals that saw a conglomeration of leaders from across the industry to deliberate on the issues of concern and get meaningful insights into the way forward with the representatives of the regulators. Conventions like these provide a platform for discussions that lead the path to a bright future for the industry. They pave a path for valuable networking, as stakeholders across the industry connect and deliberate. We hope that the essence of the industry’s growth is central to the focus of such gatherings and create valuable outcome for future debates. Indian hospitality and its progressive path is and will be inevitable, with or without the support of the those that hold the seats of power. The future belongs to #inevitableIndia.

Sumit Jha
Editor & Business Head

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The Hospitality Education Case | Revealing Reality

By Prof. Satish Jayaram, PhD – Ideator | Innovator | Incubator

A strongly worded reaction appeared like an ultimatum to hospitality education as it drew much attention on social media recently. Private chat groups were abuzz with opinions on kick-starting a set of renewal imperatives. My experience of a ring-side view over three decades, suggests judicious balance to view matters in perspective! The demand supply chasm has clearly widened over time, context may not be completely lost - but content certainly needs an overhaul. Since talent deficits get triggered largely in the front-line workforce domain, exit velocity is a natural outcome. Yet, are all education challenges appropriately represented? Have alternatives been fully evaluated? Do solutions meet multiple stakeholder expectations? And finally, does the process of incubating change, have a 360 degree buy-in? It is therefore prudent, to rationally analyse the case for hospitality education.

Several earlier columns by me on the subject, have demystified this problem domain from diverse view-points. While curriculum and structure have been a strong bone of contention, the context in which it needs to be viewed matters. The real challenge is currency and quality of content deployed today, aside the agility required to implement radical changes. Add to this the degree of flexibility available to open up a cafeteria approach, mid-stream, by offering lateral pathways. Even if adequately provided in the NEP 2020, implementation in institutions remains a linear, not concentric systemic process. Knowledge banks and delivery mechanisms demand resources to curate content - matching



education process standards including design, delivery, assessment and evaluation! Empowering and upgrading faculty members to re-build such new bodies of knowledge via design thinking with industry experts, is the only real way forward now, as redundizing the old is mandated.

Logical alternatives open are incremental changes really, many of which are in motion but may not reflect in concert, with the grand scheme of transformation. The incrementalism of this process is both a limitation, yet, perhaps the only possibility. The next alternative is structural changes, which requires renewal within mindsets of traditional academic leadership. Whether with technology, phygital, hybrid, blended or newer lateral approaches, innovation in credit accrual mechanisms must emerge as a fresh alternative. Open learning systems allow for cross-functional and multi-disciplinary credits to be sought from different domains of expertise. Previous columns have expounded considerably on a staggered

way to achieve this change. Digital knowledge will remain an open-access repository, limitations include accuracy, applicability, credibility, consistency of research versus industry practice. Social media content gains popularity, acceptance and eyeballs irrespective of above considerations.

Hybrid solutions have been incubated, proposed, disseminated and made accessible on open channels. Such a case in point, is MoE's Swayam Plus initiative with IIT Madras, an expertly curated set of credit-endowed courses and micro-credentials, currently in initial throes of adoption. Future learning systems will have to invest on digital learning for knowledge transfer. Sharp-skilling laboratories are intensely infusing physical job-ready skills to facilitate early, repeated and prolonged exposure in industry to absorb current practice. Academics working with practitioners to revise curriculum and enhance content with operations is a solution. The economy, industry and business processes, will continue to evolve new content constantly. A potential breakthrough could emerge with high quality joint research and development. This will allow best practices to surface for digital sharing across all user bases. But universal acceptance is key here, consensus building, is the first step!

Many disruptions and action research initiatives in motion, suffer the delay of adoption inertia. While innovation acceptance must go through the adoption curve, resources to facilitate integration remain scarce. Execution suffers constrained by policy, infrastructure, faculty competence, industry co-ordination and above all, collective ownership to future-proof bodies of growing knowledge. Cultural, institutional, organizational baggage aside, the first step to take is adapt learning and growing mind-sets. Once possibility thinking becomes a minimum common programme, this impasse can be broken. And by denouncing some fragmented contributions, however glaring, sawing off the very branches that talent sits on, is an unsustainable action - this will cost future generations an opportunity to thrive. The benefits of hospitality education are experienced in multiple sectors that naturally adopt this very valuable skill-set and hone it for their unique hybrid business requirements synthesizing new content.

The demand for millions of talents in the future may hardly be met by the few thousands in institutions today. Truly, the real answer is to grow more institutions in this unique domain, as signature cultural icons of hospitality for this economy. And even as we witness its growth trajectory, abundance thinking would represent greater positivity, than scarcity thinking. After all, shutting anything down in impulse may appear simpler, until it values the tenacity and contribution of generations, who built a future with vision with little, besides enterprise. In conclusion, innovation, disruption and change can only be implemented pragmatically. This transition to excellence in hospitality education, is the responsibility of all stakeholders who enjoy its myriad benefits by straddling some of its finest talents. ■

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EVENTS | MEDIA | ONLINE | PROMOTIONS

Wellness Tourism: A growing trend in the Indian hospitality sector

By **Dr. Niraalee Shah, MD, Dr. Niraalee Shah Travel Design Pvt Ltd**

In an era where self-care and holistic health have become paramount, wellness tourism is emerging as a transformative force within the hospitality industry, with an increasing number of travelers seeking rejuvenation and emotional balance, India stands poised to become a global leader in this burgeoning market, as Dr. Niraalee Shah, an expert in tourism and travel industry, emphasizes, “India has an incredible potential to lead the wellness tourism sector, thanks to our rich heritage of Ayurveda, yoga, and holistic healing.” This article delves into the rising trend of wellness tourism in India and you will discover how India is redefining travel experiences through wellness and what the future holds for this vibrant industry.

THE RISE OF WELLNESS TOURISM IN INDIA

Wellness tourism encompasses travel for the purpose of improving health, both mental and physical, through activities such as yoga, meditation, spa treatments, and holistic wellness programs. In India, wellness tourism is witnessing significant growth, positioning the country as a key player in this evolving market.

The India Wellness Tourism Market is projected to reach USD 26.55 billion by 2029, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.45% during the 2024-2029 period as per report analysis by Mordor Intelligence. However, the sector was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a sharp decline in tourist inflow and a 40% drop in wellness tourism expenditure. Despite these setbacks, India remains a popular destination for wellness travelers, driven by its rich traditions of Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation.

KEY TRENDS IN INDIA'S WELLNESS TOURISM MARKET

India's wellness tourism sector is experiencing rapid growth, driven by various factors. Here are some key trends shaping the market:

1. Government Initiatives and Increased Expenditure

The Indian government has prioritized wellness tourism under the National Medical & Wellness Tourism Board, increasing expenditure on promoting wellness services like Ayurveda and yoga to international tourists. In 2022, India allocated ₹200 crores towards promoting medical and wellness tourism initiatives.

2. Surge in Domestic Wellness Tourism

Domestic wellness tourism has surged post-pandemic, with Indian travelers seeking health-focused retreats. Wellness tourism in India is expected to grow by 20% annually, with domestic tourists making up a significant share.

3. Ayurveda and Yoga Driving Growth

Ayurveda and yoga are major growth drivers, contributing to 40% of the wellness tourism market. India's yoga and Ayurvedic services attract millions, with over 1.4 million foreign tourists visiting wellness centers annually.

4. Emerging Wellness Destinations

New destinations such as Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Kerala are emerging as wellness tourism hubs. These regions are popular for their serene landscapes and traditional healing practices, leading to a 25% rise in wellness-focused tourist footfall.

HOW WELLNESS TOURISM IS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HOSPITALITY

Wellness tourism is transforming the hospitality industry by increasing bookings, enhancing guest satisfaction, and providing a competitive edge.

Here are some key influences of wellness tourism on hospitality's future:

1. Integration of Wellness into Hotel Offerings

Hotels are incorporating wellness experiences, such as in-room yoga mats and plant-based dining, to attract health-conscious travelers. Comprehensive wellness programs with personalized fitness and mindfulness activities are also becoming common.

2. Designing Spaces for Well-being

Hotels are rethinking their design using biophilic principles, which integrate natural elements like plants and sunlight to promote relaxation and healing.

3. Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Practices

Aligning with sustainability trends, wellness retreats focus on eco-friendly practices, such as sourcing local, organic food and promoting activities like nature walks, appealing to travelers seeking harmony with nature.

4. Personalized Wellness Experiences

Customization is vital, with travelers seeking tailored experiences. Hospitality providers are using data and technology to create personalized wellness offerings, enhancing guest satisfaction.

5. Growth of Wellness Communities

Wellness retreats are fostering community by offering shared experiences and group activities, attracting solo travelers looking for connection.

FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR WELLNESS TOURISM

- **Hybrid Wellness Experiences:** Future resorts may blend traditional hospitality with wellness services, catering to both business and leisure travelers.
- **Tech-Driven Wellness Solutions:** Advancements in AI and wearable tech will provide solutions like biometric tracking and personalized digital health services, enhancing guest experiences.
- **Focus on Mental Health:** Mental health and emotional well-being will gain more attention, with retreats offering therapy, counseling, and resilience workshops.
- **Expansion of Wellness Destinations:** Wellness tourism is expected to grow beyond luxury tropical resorts to urban and remote locations, making wellness experiences more accessible to diverse travelers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, India stands poised to become a global leader in the burgeoning wellness tourism sector, leveraging its rich heritage of Ayurveda, yoga, meditation and holistic healing practices, as the demand for wellness experiences continues to rise, India's diverse landscapes and culturally rich destinations offer unique opportunities for travelers seeking rejuvenation and personal growth, with government support, a surge in domestic tourism, and a commitment to sustainable practices, the country is well-equipped to meet the evolving preferences of health-conscious travelers, by embracing this trend, India not only enhances its tourism profile but also promotes a healthier, more balanced lifestyle for visitors, ensuring a prosperous future for its hospitality industry. ■

The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.





‘India is a key visitor source for the Maldives, and we’ve customised our offerings to meet their needs’

The Indian market is essential as we target capturing 15% to 20% market share across our resorts by offering customised dining and specialised wedding services to attract both couples and families, says **Jay Ahmed, Chief Operating Officer, THE COCOON Collection Maldives and Zanzibar**, in a conversation with **Prasenjit Chakraborty**.

Q You have carried out extensive upgrades to Cocoon Maldives recently. What changes have you implemented to enhance the guest experience?

We have made significant enhancements to elevate the guest experience at Cocoon Maldives. For guests seeking exclusivity, our additional five luxurious Beach Suites now feature private pools, offering unparalleled privacy and uninterrupted views from the garden to the beach and ocean—a true retreat for relaxation.

Adventure seekers will enjoy our enhanced Lagoon Suites, with five additional suites now featuring private pools and 10 Lagoon Suites equipped with exciting water slides. These suites provide the perfect balance of excitement and tranquillity, all while overlooking the lagoon, ocean, and breathtaking sunsets.

For wellness-focused guests, our state-of-the-art gym and the newly introduced Sunset Yoga Pavilion offer ideal settings for both fitness enthusiasts and those seeking inner peace. The serene atmosphere of the pavilion, paired with stunning sunset views, makes each yoga session a rejuvenating experience.

Loabi Loabi Bar now offers exquisite cocktails in a vibrant social setting, while Kurum Bar’s chic revamp creates a sophisticated sunset venue.

Villas feature fresh paint, luxurious furnishings, upgraded fixtures, and high-quality mattresses for an enhanced stay.

Q Can you describe any unique experiences or services that set Cocoon Maldives apart from other resorts in the Maldives?

Cocoon Maldives seamlessly blends exquisite Italian design with the natural beauty of the Maldives. The interiors were crafted by renowned designer Daniele Lago from LAGO, one of Italy’s leading design firms, offering a unique fusion of modern elegance and natural surroundings.

Our all-inclusive meal plan and dining experiences combine international flavours with local Maldivian and Asian influences across a variety of venues. Guests can savour gourmet seafood, Japanese teppanyaki, and Italian delicacies, with the option of personalised destination dining under the stars.

As far as Health and Wellness are concerned, Cocoon’s Cube Spa provides therapeutic treatments to rejuvenate mind, body, and spirit, using premium natural products. Enjoy steam rooms, saunas, a Jacuzzi, a relaxing area, and a pool with advanced heating and cooling technology.

Q How does the resort incorporate local culture and traditions into the guest experience?

At Cocoon Maldives, we emphasize reconnecting guests with the local

culture and traditions. One of our key initiatives is the Maldivian Night, where guests can immerse themselves in the vibrant culture through traditional performances and festivities. We also celebrate local cuisine by inviting local women to prepare authentic Maldivian dishes, offering guests a true taste of the islands. These events allow our guests to experience the rich heritage and traditions of the Maldives in an interactive way.

Q What initiatives does Cocoon Maldives have in place to promote sustainability and environmental conservation within the resort?

On December 2022, we launched the Cocoon Foundation, which focuses on three key pillars- Economy, Education, and Environment. The foundation is dedicated to supporting local communities, particularly in the Lhaviyani, Raa, and Kaafu Atolls. Through the foundation, we conduct training sessions, host school visits from nearby islands, and provide leadership and confidence-building skills to young people aspiring to careers in hospitality.

We prioritise local products to support the economy, invest in renewable energy, and introduce a solar system to reduce fuel use.

Q What are your plans regarding the Indian market? How important is the Indian market for Cocoon Maldives?

The Indian market is vital to us, and we aim to capture 15% to 20% of the market share across our resorts. India is a key source of arrivals to the Maldives, and we’ve tailored our offerings to cater to this demographic. From customised dining experiences to specialised wedding services, we aim to appeal to both romantic couples and families. Our recent marketing events in Mumbai and Delhi have strengthened our relationships with partners and showcased the diverse experiences Cocoon Maldives offers.

Q What are your future plans for Cocoon Maldives, and how do you envision the resort evolving in the next few years?

Our future plans include expanding into both the ultra-luxury and mainstream segments, enabling us to offer diverse experiences for a wide range of travellers. We aim to enhance our portfolio with a mix of 4-star to ultra-luxury accommodations, ensuring that all guests—whether they seek adventure or relaxation—have a memorable and unique experience.

Our future strategy emphasises learning and development, collaborating with industry experts to provide world-class training that empowers staff and enhances guest experiences ■

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THE LONDON BUTLER ACADEMY
DILIGENCE · INTEGRITY



Transformation - Driven by Technological Advancements

By Prem Anand, The LONDON BUTLER ACADEMY® Switzerland

The hospitality industry is undergoing significant transformations driven by technological advancements, evolving consumer preferences, and a heightened focus on sustainability.

Key changes include:

1. **Technological Integration:** The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) is enhancing guest experiences and operational efficiency. AI-powered customer service and IoT-enabled smart rooms allow for personalized and seamless interactions. (NetSuite)
2. **Sustainability Initiatives:** Environmental consciousness is reshaping hospitality practices. Guests increasingly seek eco-friendly accommodations, prompting hotels to implement sustainable sourcing, energy-efficient operations, and waste reduction strategies. (Typsy Blog)
3. **Personalization and Experiential Offerings:** There is a growing demand for personalized services and unique experiences. Hotels are tailoring offerings to individual preferences, providing curated activities, and emphasizing local culture to enhance guest satisfaction. (Hospitality Insights)
4. **Health and Wellness Focus:** Post-pandemic, there is an increased emphasis on health and wellness amenities. Guests prioritize properties offering wellness programs, health-centric products, and services that promote well-being. (Lightspeed)
5. **Rise of Bleisure Travel:** The blending of business and leisure travel, known as "bleisure," is on the rise. Hotels are adapting by providing work-friendly environments alongside leisure amenities to cater to this hybrid traveller segment. (NetSuite)
6. **Labor Market Adjustments:** The industry faces challenges in workforce management, including labour shortages and the need for upskilling.



"I am deeply passionate about human behaviour and its impact on service excellence. I bring many years of successful luxury service experience from the United Kingdom. I empower businesses, leaders, and teams to master client engagement, influence, and create experiences which make their clients become their loyal ambassadors. I am Prem Anand, the founder of The London Butler Academy in Switzerland, which helps businesses in India provide Swiss Standards."

Hotels are investing in employee training and offering improved working conditions to attract and retain talent. (Hospitality Insights)

These trends reflect the industry's commitment to innovation, sustainability, and personalized guest experiences, positioning it to meet contemporary demands and future challenges.

The hospitality industry is experiencing several notable developments:

1. **Expansion of Luxury All-Inclusive Resorts in Europe:** Major U.S. hotel groups, including Marriott and Hyatt, are broadening their all-inclusive offerings in Europe.

Hyatt has recently opened Dreams Madeira in Portugal and partnered with Spain's Grupo Piñero to add 23 resorts to its portfolio.

Marriott is also exploring expansion in Europe, with potential sites in Turkey. This trend caters to travelers seeking comprehensive, stress-free experiences. (The Times)

2. **Integration of Advanced Wellness Programs:** Luxury hotels are introducing extensive wellness services, such as IV drips, full-body MRIs, and personalized nutrition plans, with some packages priced up to \$40,000.

This caters to affluent guests focused on health and longevity, reflecting a growing demand for science-driven wellness solutions in hospitality. (Business Insider)

3. **Implementation of the Safe Hotels Act in New York City:** Mayor Eric Adams has signed the Safe Hotels Act into law, requiring NYC hotels to obtain biennial licenses and adhere to specific safety, staffing, and cleanliness standards. Non-compliance could result in fines up to \$5,000.

The law also mandates employee panic buttons and human trafficking training, aiming to enhance safety and service quality in the city's hospitality sector. (New York Post)

4. **Rising Hotel Room Rates in the U.S.:** Hotel room rates have increased significantly, with \$200-a-night rooms becoming more common and considered a bargain in many markets.

In 2019, only 13% of hotels in the top 25 markets charged \$200 or more on average; this has risen to over 20% in 2024.

Cities like Boston, Miami, and New York now see average rates exceeding \$200 per night. (The Wall Street Journal)

These developments highlight the industry's adaptability and focus on enhancing guest experiences through diversified offerings and improved safety measures. ■



‘Our products are complete culinary solutions crafted to meet the ever-evolving demands of chefs’

In a robust conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee** about the future of culinary innovation, **Pankaj Chaturvedi, Managing Director of Rich Products & Solutions Pvt. Ltd.**, opens up about Rich’s dedication to transforming culinary solutions for the hospitality industry. “At Rich’s, our products go beyond high-quality ingredients—they are complete culinary solutions crafted to meet the ever-evolving demands of chefs, retail bakers, and food service operators,” Chaturvedi shares.

Rich’s comprehensive support includes not only supplying top-notch products but also assisting chefs and restaurant operators with menu planning, innovation, and expansion, creating an ecosystem where creativity thrives. “It’s not just about ingredients; it’s about helping our customers succeed by empowering them with the tools they need to drive business growth,” he explains.

Among Rich’s product lineup, Versatie Gold Cooking Cream has emerged as a standout, exemplifying the company’s ethos of versatility and innovation. “Versatie Gold is designed to be multipurpose, making it perfect for a wide range of hot and cold applications, whether sweet or savory,” Chaturvedi notes. From hearty soups and tikkas to smooth dips and creamy gravies, the cream allows chefs to introduce richness across the menu. “One cream, infinite possibilities,” he continues, emphasizing how the product supports chefs in creating diverse, appealing dishes efficiently. What sets Versatie Gold apart is its ambient storage capability, meaning it doesn’t require refrigeration until opened—a logistical advantage that helps manage storage more effectively in busy kitchens. This extended shelf life and ease of storage free up refrigerator space, streamlining operations for high-demand culinary environments.

Rich’s commitment to helping chefs achieve consistency and quality shows through in the product’s unique formulation. “Unlike other creams, Versatie Gold can withstand high heat without splitting or curdling,” Chaturvedi explains, a feature that adds reliability for dishes like Dal Makhani, Paneer Lababdar, and Soya Chaap. “It’s ideal for both savory and sweet creations,” he adds. When chilled, the cream thickens to a luxurious texture, making it equally suited for dessert items such as fruit creams, where its consistency shines. By enabling chefs to maintain quality and creativity, Versatie Gold has become a go-to solution for the hospitality industry’s diverse culinary needs.

As part of Rich’s ongoing commitment to expanding its product portfolio, Chaturvedi is excited about their latest developments. “Our new Ujjain plant is a milestone, equipped with advanced technology that enhances our production capacity,” he says. Rich’s recent expansion at the Ujjain facility marks a strategic move toward sustainable growth and aims to meet increasing customer demands. This state-of-the-art plant supports the company’s goal of ‘Transforming Tomorrow Together’ and reflects Rich’s long-term vision for continued growth. “This plant will help us expand our product

offerings and explore new categories, all while maintaining the high quality our customers have come to expect from Rich’s,” Chaturvedi shares.

The growth trajectory for Rich’s in India and neighboring markets, especially in the HoReCa (Hotels, Restaurants, and Cafes) segment, is impressive. “India stands out as a dynamic, progressive market with a high purchasing power, encouraging demand for premium products,” Chaturvedi states, pointing to the urban trend of consumers drawn to innovation and indulgence. Urban centers are particularly ripe for exploring new culinary trends, with an appetite for unique desserts and beverages. “This enthusiasm for new food choices creates an exciting space for Rich’s to introduce products that cater to evolving consumer desires,” he observes.

Looking ahead, Rich’s is gearing up for significant expansion within the HoReCa sector, a decision in line with growing market demand for high-quality, versatile ingredients. “We’re expanding our portfolio to support basket selling—providing a diverse range of products that cater to all kitchen needs,” Chaturvedi explains. Rich’s plans include exploring new product lines, tapping into culinary trends, and collaborating with chefs and food service operators to bring creative solutions to market. “Our goal is to help chefs succeed by offering innovative products that simplify their work and enhance their creativity,” he says.

In envisioning the long-term future, Chaturvedi sees Rich’s role evolving with the dynamic landscape of the hospitality industry. “Our vision is to become the top choice for culinary professionals, focusing on innovation and providing exceptional support,” he asserts. This vision includes not only expanding Rich’s product offerings but also fostering deeper relationships with industry leaders. “We’re dedicated to entering new markets and bringing value to the culinary world,” he says. Rich’s also aims to strengthen ties with top chefs, culinary schools, and industry groups, promoting culinary excellence and supporting industry innovation.

With an unwavering focus on quality, versatility, and customer collaboration, Rich’s continues to set the standard for culinary solutions in the hospitality industry. As Chaturvedi concludes, “We’re committed to helping our customers succeed, one innovation at a time.” ■

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ICF Marks Culinary Excellence at the 21st Annual Chef Awards on the Occasion of International Chefs Day

A dazzling evening of culinary brilliance unfolded at the 21st Annual Chef Awards, hosted by the Indian Culinary Forum (ICF) at the Hotel Ashok in New Delhi. This grand event, held in celebration of International Chefs Day, gathered an elite assembly of master chefs and industry veterans, all coming together to acknowledge the artistry and dedication that defines the culinary world. The night was illuminated by the presence of Nakul Anand, former Executive Director of ITC Hotels, who had the honor of presenting awards to the outstanding culinary artists recognized for their exceptional contributions to the hospitality industry.

The Chef Awards by the Indian Culinary Forum (ICF) are among India's most prestigious culinary accolades, honoring the exceptional contributions of chefs and elevating the reputation of Indian cuisine worldwide. These awards not only celebrate individual achievements but also serve as a catalyst for inspiring chefs to pursue excellence in their craft and bring international prestige to Indian cuisine. As the oldest association formed in 1987 dedicated to representing professional chefs in India, the ICF plays a pivotal role in recognizing and promoting culinary excellence.



Chef Davinder Kumar, President of the Indian Culinary Forum, expressed his pride in the ceremony, highlighting the significance of honoring those who have made a lasting impact in the culinary world. "The Chef Awards celebrate the dedication and creativity of our culinary artists. Their contributions are invaluable to the hospitality industry, and we are committed

to showcasing their talent. This year's awards highlight the innovative spirit of our chefs, and it is a pleasure to witness their hard work being recognized on such a grand platform. I believe these awards will not only motivate the awardees but also inspire upcoming chefs to explore their culinary passions and push the boundaries of their creativity."

This year's ceremony celebrated 17 culinary artists for their outstanding contributions to the hospitality industry. The awards were divided into two categories: 5 Chef Awards, determined through nominations and selected by a grand jury, and 12 MasterChef Awards, awarded following a rigorous four-day culinary competition involving over 150 chefs from across India. The competitions took place at the Institute of Bakery & Culinary Arts (IBCA) in Vikaspuri and the Banarsidas Chandiwala Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology in Delhi. A distinguished panel of WACS-certified jury members from all over India meticulously judged the participants. This year's competitions were chaired by the esteemed Chef Nimish Bhatia, with Chef Rajeev Chopra serving as the organizing secretary.

Chef Vivek Saggur, General Secretary of the Indian Culinary Forum, emphasized the importance of such events in fostering culinary talent. He said, "The Chef Awards not only recognize excellence but also inspire the next generation of chefs to push the boundaries of culinary innovation. It is our responsibility to create an environment where creativity flourishes and where chefs feel empowered to showcase their



unique culinary voices. The rigorous competitions we held this year were a testament to the talent present in our community, and we are proud to support these chefs as they continue to contribute to the rich tapestry of Indian cuisine."

Chef Vinod Bhati, the Treasurer of the Indian Culinary Forum, extended his profound gratitude, saying, "We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our event partners and supporting associations who collectively played an instrumental role in making this event a resounding success. Their unwavering support and commitment to excellence in the culinary arts have truly elevated this celebration. Together, we are fostering a vibrant culinary community that inspires creativity and innovation across the industry."

The winners of the 21st Annual Chef Awards are as follows:

- Lifetime Achievement Award:** Chef Sanjiv Mediratta
- Golden Hat Chef:** Chef (Dr.) Gautam Chaudhry, Demiurgic Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.
- Silver Hat Chef:** Chef Diwas Wadhwa, Eros Hotel, Nehru Place, ND
- Pastry Chef of the Year:** Chef Syed Ali Miya Naqvi, Radisson Kaushambi
- Shri Anil Bhandari Chef of the Year:** Chef Vikram Shokeen, The Ashok
- Master Chef Carver:** Chef Praveen Kumar, IHC, Habitat World Delhi
- Master Chef Butcher:** Chef Sanjay Bakhla, Le-Meridien, Delhi
- Master Chef Kebab:** Chef Praveen Kumar, Country Inn & Suites, Sahibabad
- Master Chef Indian Sweets:** Chef Omvir Singh, The Ashok
- Master Chef International Confectionery:** Chef Deepak Kumar, JW Marriott, Aerocity
- Master Chef East West South Indian Cuisine:** Chef Sunder Rajan, Caddie Hotels Aerocity
- Master Chef North Indian Cuisine:** Chef Navjot Singh, Novotel Aerocity
- Master Chef International Cuisine:** Chef Aman Prajapati, Delhi Aerocity, GMR
- Master Chef Oriental Cuisine:** Chef Suraj Thakur, Eros Hotel, Nehru Place, ND
- Master Chef Baker:** Chef Sunny, Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi
- Student Chef of the Year (Female):** Shaila Swamy, IBCA
- Student Chef of the Year (Male):** Rishi Goyal, Vedatya Institute. ■



FHRAI 54th Annual Convention Sets Vision for India's Tourism Industry by 2047

HBI Staff | Goa

The 54th FHRAI (Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India) Convention 2024, known as one of India's premier gatherings in the hospitality sector, recently concluded at Taj Cidade de Goa with fanfare. The theme of the convention "Tourism @2047: Incredible to Inevitable India - Driving Growth and Sustainability in a Mission Mode", was in alignment with the Government of India's vision of developed India by 2047.

This long-awaited gathering, held successfully after a six-year hiatus, marked a significant moment for the Indian hospitality industry. The Convention deliberated on all aspects impacting the tourism and hospitality sector in the country and came out with pragmatic solutions to transform this vision into reality. The platform brought together key

stakeholders of the hospitality industry along with industry experts and thought leaders, to discuss and deliberate on the latest trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the industry. The 3-day gala event featured panels, workshops, and networking opportunities designed to provide actionable insights, supporting hospitality professionals in navigating an evolving landscape and contributing to the sector's continued development.

The event opened with the Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and the Chief Minister of Goa, Dr. Pramod Sawant, emphasising India's tourism growth potential and the need to streamline policies for greater efficiency and sustainability. D.S. Advani, Chairman of the Convention Organizing Committee (COC), and Pradeep Shetty, FHRAI President, welcomed the attendees, setting the stage for three days of discussions.

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat outlined the crucial role tourism plays in the country's economic development. He highlighted ongoing efforts to gain "industry status" for tourism across states, easing GST burdens, and improving infrastructure. Notable initiatives like "Dekho Apna Desh" and "Chalo India" target the Indian diaspora, encouraging them to explore India's cultural richness. Shekhawat underscored India's position on the global stage, detailing efforts to develop new tourism hubs, particularly in rural areas, to spread economic benefits and increase tourist arrivals.

Rohan Khaunte, Goa's Tourism Minister, expressed pride in hosting the convention after 12 years. He envisions a USD 3 trillion tourism economy by 2047, drawing 100 million international visitors annually.



Goa aims to become a tourism hub that transcends beach tourism by promoting cultural experiences and sustainable practices to offer visitors holistic experiences.

Dr. Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister of Goa, highlighted the government's focus on sustainability, digitalisation, and job creation. The Chief Minister stressed that Goa is ready to serve as a model of tourism diversification, driven by collaborative efforts between the industry and the state. He underscored Goa's readiness to welcome a more diverse range of tourists and offer unique inland experiences beyond its iconic beaches.

Pradeep Shetty, President of FHRAI, reinforced the sector's economic importance, asserting that tourism's real contribution to India's GDP may be as high as 12-13%, given the significant portion of unorganized businesses within the industry. "Tourism has the power to transform India's economy, with its unique capacity to generate jobs across all levels of society," Shetty stated. He noted the potential for an additional 50,000-60,000 rooms in the coming years, which would increase employment, especially for youth and women. He called for reforms in GST and emphasised the need to shift from "promise" to "delivery," making tourism a true growth engine for India.

The convention paid tribute to icons in Indian hospitality with the Lifetime Achievement Award posthumously presented to Late P.R.S. Oberoi, Former Executive Chairman of EIH Limited. His legacy remains a cornerstone of the Indian luxury hotel industry. The Hall of Fame Award recognized Dr. Ajit B. Kerkar, Late Capt. C.P. Krishnan Nair, and Lalit Suri for their groundbreaking work in establishing luxury hospitality in India.

Pradeep Shetty emphasised the contributions of these pioneers, stating, "The legacies of these individuals remind us of the commitment and passion required to excel in hospitality. Their contributions have transformed our industry, ensuring it continues to offer world-class experiences."

Day Two: Navigating Trends and Emerging Opportunities

On the convention's second day, industry leaders examined post-pandemic recovery and emerging trends. The Honourable Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Nitin Gadkari, shared his support for the sector through a video message. He noted that hospitality remains a major employment driver, underpinned by government projects to enhance tourism through infrastructure, from expressways to modern amenities at tourist destinations. Gadkari highlighted plans to develop 18 new tourist destinations and underscored the industry's potential to boost local economies.

In an impactful session, Manav Thadani, Founder Chairman of Hotelivate, discussed shifts in consumer needs and the industry's post-pandemic growth. Chander Baljee, CMD of Royal Orchid Hotels, emphasized the need for agility and digitalization to maintain

'Meticulous planning and effort drive success of 54th FHRAI Convention'



As the Chairman of the FHRAI Convention Committee, Dinesh Advani played a pivotal role in organising the highly anticipated 54th Annual FHRAI Convention in Goa, held after a multi-year hiatus. In an exclusive interview with **Hospitality Biz** at the convention, Advani reflects on the achievements of the event, which attracted nearly 800 delegates, making it one of the largest FHRAI conventions in recent memory.

Q As the Chairman of the Convention Committee, how would you rate this convention? What are your key learnings from this event, which seems to be one of the largest FHRAI conventions in recent years?

I believe this convention has been a great success. We have had a fantastic turnout, especially considering that this is the first FHRAI convention we have hosted in several years. A lot of meticulous planning, effort, and hard work went into organising it, and I am glad to see that most of the delegates seem to be very happy with the experience. While we still have another day to go, the feedback so far has been extremely positive. I sincerely hope that this energy continues in future conventions.

Q How many delegates attended this year, and what are some of the key takeaways from organising a convention of this scale after such a long break?

We have had over 700 delegates – nearly 800, to be precise – which is an excellent number for us. The exhibition saw strong footfalls, and both the sponsors and exhibitors have expressed their satisfaction. The business sessions were also well received, and we have seen real value in terms of the learnings shared with delegates.

One of the most encouraging aspects

is the participation of the younger generation, who were exposed to the FHRAI convention for the first time. They now have a better understanding of the event's importance, which bodes well for the future. Going forward, I believe it's critical to maintain this tradition, especially after the disruption caused by the pandemic. I am confident that in future editions, we will achieve even better numbers and continue to build on this momentum.

Q With the leadership transitioning to South India, including a new President and Convention Committee, what challenges do you foresee for them, and how do you think they should progress on the success of this convention?

I am certain that the new team, led by South India, will do an excellent job. They have always been capable, and they will have the flexibility to decide where they want to hold the next convention. I believe they will take important learnings from this event and apply them moving forward. Ensuring high-quality speakers and engaging entertainment will be key to maintaining the convention's success. Under K Syama Raju's leadership, I am confident they will continue this tradition with great success. He's proven to be a strong president, and I have no doubt that his team will excel. ■

FHRAI President Pradeep Shetty reflects on achievements, industry growth, and future prospects

In an exclusive conversation with Hospitality Biz at the 54th Annual Convention in Goa, Pradeep Shetty, the outgoing President of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), looked back on his tenure, highlighting the association's pivotal role in shaping policy and fostering industry collaboration. As Shetty prepares to pass the torch to the next president, he underscored FHRAI's major achievements in advocacy and partnerships that strengthened the hospitality landscape.

Shetty spoke about key moments in FHRAI's advocacy journey, including the Sustainability Summit in Delhi, which brought together government officials, including Amitabh Kant, and industry leaders. A significant outcome of the summit was the sustainability report produced in collaboration with KPMG, which detailed the industry's existing practices and outlined areas for improvement. Additionally, FHRAI hosted important stakeholder events, such as a landmark meeting in Srinagar, which was the first post the abrogation of Article 370, marking a significant milestone for the industry in the region. This event saw local hoteliers and national board members come together, strengthening FHRAI's regional outreach.

Shetty also informed that, in terms of partnerships, FHRAI signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with organisations such as the Indian Plumbing Association, CII

Green Building Council and the Amusement Park Association, showcasing a strategy to integrate hospitality with ancillary sectors. "These collaborations reflect FHRAI's vision to elevate industry standards and sustainability while addressing infrastructural and service needs," he added.

Shetty pointed out a major achievement during his presidency was the establishment of the FHRAI Centre of Excellence, a think-tank aimed at driving research and collaboration within the sector. The Center released its first report on the Ease of Doing Business, addressing bureaucratic challenges and streamlining processes for the hospitality industry. This effort is poised to assist both industry players and policymakers in creating a more conducive business environment.

Reflecting on the broader hospitality landscape, Shetty noted the significant recovery the industry has witnessed post-pandemic. "Our revenues are now exceeding pre-pandemic levels," he stated, adding that while foreign tourist arrivals still lag, domestic travel has surged, spurred by infrastructure development in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. The industry has demonstrated resilience, bouncing back from one of the most challenging periods, with strong performances and increasing demand.

Looking ahead, Shetty predicts the addition of 50,000 to 60,000 rooms in the hospitality sector over the next five years, driven by



government reforms and the continued rise of domestic tourism. However, challenges such as GST rationalisation and access to long-term funding remain, and Shetty stressed that these issues will be key areas of focus for FHRAI moving forward.

As Shetty prepares to step down, the leadership of FHRAI will transition to the new president, who is expected to continue addressing key challenges facing the industry. Shetty remains confident in the association's continued efforts, stating that while significant progress has been made, particularly with government stakeholders, more work is required to ensure that reforms such as GST adjustments and easier lending conditions are fully realised.

"The ongoing FHRAI Annual Convention, with participation from 800 delegates and representation from both state and central government, highlighted the association's growing influence," he concluded. ■

competitiveness. A sustainability-focused panel, led by Gurmit Singh Arora, spotlighted regenerative practices, balancing environmental impact and guest satisfaction.

Mugdha Sinha, Director General of Tourism, presented a strategic vision for expanding India's wedding tourism. "India's wedding sector offers immense economic potential, second only to China," Sinha said, noting that weddings attract a large domestic and international market. By improving connectivity, easing visa processes, and offering curated experiences, India could strengthen its position as a top wedding destination.

Further, a session on restaurant trends, led by Rahul Akerkar, delved into dining innovations and the role of technology in enhancing customer engagement. Siddhartha Chaturvedi discussed the boom in luxury weddings, underscoring the revenue

opportunities for hotels catering to this market segment.

Pradeep Shetty remarked on the day's insights, "Today's discussions reflect the hospitality sector's commitment to drive growth, create jobs, and prioritize sustainability while adapting to an evolving market."





Day Three: Building Sustainable Pathways and Regional Cooperation

The final day in Goa saw sessions centered on strategic partnerships and regulatory ease. Goa's government emphasized its plans to diversify its offerings beyond beaches, capitalizing on cultural tourism and wellness initiatives. The government is developing policies to support homestays and local entrepreneurs in partnership with platforms like Airbnb and Agoda, aiming to enrich Goa's tourism landscape and support local communities.

Key discussions focused on capacity building and the need for cohesive state and central government collaboration. Single-window clearances and regulatory ease were proposed to streamline processes and boost tourism investments, drawing examples from the state of Punjab, which invested INR 87,000 crore over the past two years in tourism infrastructure.

Goa's Tourism Director, Suneel Anchipaka, reflected on the convention's impact, "The collaborative spirit of this convention inspires us to drive growth and sustainability in India's tourism sector. Goa is committed to leading this journey with regenerative tourism at its core."

Punjab's Secretary of Industry and Investment Promotion, Amit Kharbanda, shared insights on policy initiatives designed to position

tourism as a primary economic sector. With significant investments, Punjab aims to enhance its tourism offerings and capitalize on the growing interest in cultural and rural tourism.

The FHRAI convention demonstrated a unified vision for a sustainable and resilient future for India's tourism industry. From addressing regulatory bottlenecks to enhancing infrastructure and fostering sustainable practices, the discussions underscored the sector's potential as a key economic contributor. Recognizing that tourism has the ability to create jobs across demographics, delegates reinforced the industry's commitment to inclusivity and innovation.

The event concluded with a Vote of Thanks from Vinay Albuquerque, Co-Chairman of the COC, who inaugurated the Exhibition hosted by the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL). Delegates explored the exhibition, showcasing the latest trends and innovations in hospitality. The convention closed on a note of optimism, with a clear roadmap to position Indian tourism not only as incredible but inevitable.

In the words of Pradeep Shetty, "The FHRAI convention reaffirms the tourism sector's pivotal role in India's growth story. As we move from 'Incredible India' to 'Inevitable India,' our focus will be on real results—meeting challenges head-on and creating a more vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive future for tourism in India." ■





‘Our hotel has recorded 6% YOY growth in occupancy and 10% growth in ADR’

Radisson Blu is gearing up for substantial growth in Rajasthan and beyond, with a strategic focus on Udaipur as a prime location. In a conversation, with **Asmita Mukherjee, Mahesh Singh Jasrotia, Vice President of Operations at Radisson Blu Udaipur**, revealed ambitious growth plans of the brand, such as opening the Fairmont Palace in Udaipur, envisioned to deliver an unmatched guest experience and redefine luxury standards in Indian hospitality. This expansion strategy is complemented by upcoming properties in Jaipur and Mumbai, chosen for their vibrant tourism, cultural appeal, and growing corporate presence.

Q Can you share if there are any upcoming expansion strategies for Radisson Blu in Udaipur or other key regions? Are there specific markets you are focusing on for future growth?

We are aiming to expand our business by establishing hotels with a particular focus on Rajasthan and other regions in India. The launch of the Fairmont Palace in Udaipur is a key part of this strategy. We have designed this property to provide an unmatched guest experience and world-class amenities. The Fairmont Palace is set to transform the Indian hospitality landscape, redefine excellence, and establish new benchmark standards for the luxury hotel segment.

We also have upcoming properties planned in Jaipur and Mumbai. Mumbai, as the financial capital of India, is an obvious choice due to its status as a large metropolitan hub for corporate, entertainment, and fashion industries. Additionally, Jaipur is a significant market in Rajasthan, known for its pink-hued architecture, cultural heritage, delectable local cuisine, and religious landmarks. This city remains a major tourist attraction, making it an excellent location for our establishment.

Q What makes Udaipur such a strategic location for a hotel, particularly in balancing the demands of business and leisure travel?

Udaipur stands out as an extraordinary destination that seamlessly blends stunning scenic beauty with top-notch infrastructure, making it ideal for both leisure travel and high-profile corporate events. As a burgeoning hub for business travel, Udaipur offers exceptional rail, road, and air connectivity, bolstered by ongoing

infrastructure enhancements. The Maharana Pratap Airport (Dabok) links the city to major metropolitan centers such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru, with exciting plans for an integrated terminal set to launch by 2026. This enhanced connectivity is already driving an increase in inbound tourism and promises continued growth in the future.

Recognizing the potential for expansion, we have strategically diversified our offerings beyond a single niche. This proactive approach has empowered us to align our business development strategies and marketing campaigns to attract a broader clientele.

Our results speak volumes. We have successfully hosted high-profile events, including Isha Ambani and Anand Piramal’s pre-wedding celebrations and Neil Nitin Mukesh’s wedding, in addition to prestigious gatherings such as awards nights and elite conferences. Recently, we organized the GST conference and the Sustainable Financial Working Group (SFWG) meeting under India’s G20 Presidency. Furthermore, our venue was chosen as the backdrop for the launch of the movie *Khel Khel Khel Mein*, further establishing our strong appeal within the entertainment industry.

Q How has Radisson Blu Palace Resort and Spa, Udaipur performed in terms of RevPAR, Occupancy Rates and Average Daily Rate (ADR) over the past year?

For the last 12 months, Radisson Blu Palace Resort and Spa, Udaipur, has delivered excellent performance on all the RevPAR, Occupancy Rates, and Average Daily Rate (ADR). Our hotel has recorded 6% YOY growth in occupancy and 10% growth in

ADR making our metrics have been at par and in line with the industry benchmarks for luxury properties in Udaipur. For further improvements in these numbers, we are taking some strategic steps.

Q What are the current demand trends driving the luxury hospitality sector in Udaipur? Do you foresee any shifts in the types of travellers, particularly in the balance between international tourists and domestic travellers?

Environmental conscience has become an inherent part of guests’ psyche. We anticipate that this growing emphasis on eco-friendly luxury among domestic travellers, complemented by international visitors seeking responsible tourism, is in focus.

In line with that, we emphasise energy-efficient solutions such as solar energy, which powers our property through a plant located near Bikaner to cater to increasing domestic tourist influx. Our approach to natural daylight—ensuring public spaces and meeting rooms are illuminated naturally—also resonates with guests valuing sustainability. Sensor-based lighting and energy-efficient LED installations further optimise energy use.

In this dynamic industry, travellers are exploring high-end experiences within India. The resurgence of domestic travel, partly driven by a post-pandemic shift towards local tourism, is also evident in Udaipur. In 2023 alone, 179 Mn domestic tourists entered the state while the foreign tourist arrival stood at only 1.7 Mn. This displays that the number of local tourists will be the backbone of the hospitality sector in the long term. ■

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'The strategic transition to managed operations allows Marriott to better align sales and marketing approaches tailored to each hotel's unique market dynamics'



In a significant strategic move, Marriott International has announced the transition of six prominent hotels in India from franchise to managed operations. This transition—impacting key properties in Hyderabad, Pune, Ahmedabad, Chennai, and Jaipur—signals Marriott's continued commitment to expanding its footprint in both business and leisure markets across India. The change also aligns Marriott's global capabilities with India's evolving hospitality landscape, fostering greater brand consistency and operational excellence. In an exclusive interview with **Asmita Mukherjee, Tarun Dutta, Cluster Director of Sales & Marketing at Marriott International**, provided insights into the motivations and anticipated impact of this transition on Marriott's broader business objectives in India.

When asked about the rationale behind this move, Dutta explained, "The strategic transition to managed operations allows Marriott to better align sales and marketing approaches tailored to each hotel's unique market dynamics. This shift also expands Marriott's managed portfolio with SAMHI Hotels, bringing our Indian presence to 11 properties and allowing us to leverage Marriott's capabilities to drive consistent, value-led business."

Marriott's direct management will also enhance the guest experience at these properties. According to Dutta, "Properties transitioning from franchise to managed will benefit from Marriott's global expertise, with upgraded quality standards ensuring a seamless and memorable guest experience. Guests will experience elevated comfort, innovation, and consistent service across all managed hotels under Marriott's renowned hospitality standards."

Additionally, guests will have access to the Marriott Bonvoy program, giving members exclusive benefits like bonus points, late checkouts, and access to transformative experiences both locally and globally, added Dutta.

Beyond strengthening its brand presence, this shift is designed to implement key operational synergies that enhance performance and efficiency across these hotels, according to Dutta, one of the primary areas of focus is Brand Standards Implementation and Audit. Marriott's renowned global standards will be rigorously applied across each property, ensuring consistency in service and quality. Regular audits will keep these standards in check, upholding Marriott's commitment to a seamless, premium guest experience. This standardised approach will reinforce Marriott's reputation, allowing guests to expect and receive the same level of service and quality no matter which location

they visit.

He also shared that Marriott's Revenue Shared Services offer another synergy, allowing the company to utilise shared resources across properties to streamline costs and drive profitability. By optimising revenue management, these hotels can maintain a balanced financial strategy that maximises performance while reducing inefficiencies—a major win in today's competitive market.

Dutta pointed out Enhanced Sales Support plays a pivotal role as well. Marriott's national and global sales teams will actively support each property to attract guests and boost occupancy, using targeted strategies to tap into both local and international markets. With this expanded network, Marriott's newly managed hotels gain access to valuable market insights and resources that enable them to adapt swiftly and effectively to changing market demands.

Marriott's Digital Optimisation and Market Campaigns are another key component, he said. Leveraging Marriott's robust digital services, each property will benefit from a strong online presence, optimised digital channels, and participation in strategic marketing campaigns.

With access to the Marriott Bonvoy loyalty program and Marriott's global sales network, these properties are well-positioned to tap into new revenue streams. Dutta highlighted the value of Bonvoy's loyal member base, "With over 210 million members globally, Bonvoy provides a consistent base of loyal customers. Targeted marketing and member-exclusive offers will drive occupancy and repeat business, enhancing revenue potential for these hotels." Through Bonvoy, Marriott can also capture new customers looking for personalised, high-quality travel experiences.

In business hubs like Chennai, Pune, and Hyderabad, Marriott will leverage its expertise to cater to the expanding corporate and MICE

(Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) markets. Dutta explained, "With enhanced meeting spaces, seamless event services, and value-driven accommodation, we are well-positioned to meet the needs of corporate travelers and MICE organisers, making Marriott the preferred choice for business engagements in these cities."

Looking beyond the corporate sphere, Marriott's 'Shaadi by Marriott' program focuses on the Indian wedding market, which is booming with demand for experiential and destination weddings. Dutta stated, "Shaadi by Marriott provides a seamless wedding experience, from customised cuisine by top chefs to event planning by our Shaadi Specialists. This approach allows us to create unforgettable wedding experiences, enhancing Marriott's appeal as a premier wedding destination."

Transitioning six properties to managed operations presents challenges, including adapting to Marriott's systems and unifying the guest experience. However, Dutta sees this as an opportunity, "This transition enables hotel teams to adopt new skills that enhance operational efficiency and service delivery. The collaboration across properties strengthens overall performance, enabling us to meet client demands while providing consistent service quality," he said.

The shift to managed operations allows Marriott to adopt a sales strategy that aligns with each property's unique market dynamics. Dutta noted, "Marriott's distribution network and Bonvoy loyalty program offer enhanced visibility and engagement, enabling us to optimise revenue potential based on local market demands and customer profiles." With tailored offerings, Marriott can target a broader range of travelers, from corporate executives to vacationers and wedding parties. ■

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‘We aim to blend Bhutanese tradition with the needs of today’s travellers’



In a world where luxury often equates to excess, Pemako Hotels is carving out a unique space in Bhutan’s hospitality landscape by blending tradition, nature, and transformative experiences. **Vishal Pradhan, Operations and Marketing Manager, Pemako Hotels**, explains, the vision behind the brand is to offer more than just a luxury stay—it’s about creating a meaningful journey that engages all senses.

“We aim to blend Bhutanese tradition with the needs of today’s travellers. Our properties are designed to embody the essence of Bhutan—a peaceful retreat where time slows down, encouraging guests to disconnect, reflect, and renew,” says Pradhan.

Pemako’s properties in Thimphu and Punakha are prime examples of this philosophy. The urban sanctuary of Pemako Thimphu, resembling a medieval fortress, combines traditional Bhutanese architecture with modern comforts. “After exploring local markets and ancient monasteries, guests can receive sacred blessings from our in-house lama and enjoy cultural performances, deepening their connection to Bhutan’s rich heritage,” explains Pradhan.

In contrast, Pemako Punakha offers a nature-centric retreat, designed by Bill Bensley, where guests can immerse themselves in traditional Bhutanese activities like archery, khuru, and cooking classes. “We want every moment to contribute to a meaningful and enriching stay,” adds Pradhan, emphasising that these curated experiences are designed to rejuvenate both body and soul.

When asked what sets Pemako apart from other luxury brands, Pradhan points to the brand’s commitment to authentic, transformative experiences rooted in Bhutanese culture. “Our tented villas at Pemako Punakha are a base for guests to disconnect from distractions and reconnect with themselves. From private heated pools to a spa rooted in Sowa Rigpa, Bhutan’s traditional medicine, every detail is crafted to reflect

Bhutan’s essence,” Pradhan notes. The properties also feature unique offerings such as Buddhism talks, prayer ceremonies, and birdwatching, ensuring that guests leave with a deeper connection to the land and its traditions.

Pemako Thimphu, on the other hand, blends the grandeur of Bhutanese architecture with contemporary amenities, offering both intimate retreats and spaces for grand gatherings, making it a destination in its own right.

Pemako has its sights set on further expansion, with Paro likely being the next destination. According to Pradhan, the Indian market plays a crucial role in Pemako’s growth strategy. “India accounted for 60% of total visitors to Bhutan in 2024, with affluent Indian travellers showing great interest in our luxury boutique accommodations. This year, we’re focusing on partnerships with travel agents and marketing initiatives to broaden our reach in India,” shares Pradhan.

Bhutan’s unique high-value, low-impact tourism model is at the core of Pemako’s operational philosophy. Pradhan emphasizes that Pemako is deeply committed to sustainable practices, from sourcing local materials to minimizing its ecological footprint. “We tread lightly on the earth while leaving a lasting imprint on the hearts of those who journey with us. In doing so, we honour Bhutan’s wisdom in preserving its natural and cultural treasures,” Pradhan says.

Pemako’s long-term vision is to shape Bhutan’s luxury hospitality sector by blending the country’s rich cultural heritage with modern, sustainable luxury. As Pradhan outlines, “In today’s fast-paced world, nothing is more precious than the time and space to journey inward. Pemako is about offering that space through immersive, authentic experiences that celebrate Bhutanese traditions.”

With plans to expand across Bhutan, a stronger focus on sustainability, wellness, and spiritual experiences, and strategic partnerships, Pemako is poised to become a leader in high-end tourism. “We see Pemako evolving into a key player in making Bhutan a sought-after luxury destination,” Pradhan says.

Through its blend of luxury, culture, and sustainability, Pemako Hotels is redefining what it means to offer a transformative guest experience in Bhutan. As Pradhan aptly puts it, “Our goal is to create destinations that take guests on a deeper journey within themselves, offering more than just a stay, but a meaningful experience rooted in Bhutan’s rich traditions.”

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‘Luxury is no longer just about exclusivity; it’s about creating personalised, meaningful experiences’



In a transformative era for Dubai’s hospitality and real estate sectors, ANAX Holding stands out under the leadership of **Satish Sanpal, Chairman, ANAX Holding**. Through its two flagship divisions, ANAX Hospitality and ANAX Developments, the company is pioneering projects that blend sustainability, innovative concepts, and luxury experiences to strengthen Dubai’s reputation as a global tourism and lifestyle destination.

“ANAX Hospitality is all about innovation, sustainability, and elevated guest experiences, with a strong focus on redefining luxury,” says Sanpal. This vision is tightly integrated with ANAX Developments, its sister subsidiary, as both entities work synergistically to reshape Dubai’s luxury real estate and hospitality landscape. “Together, we’re creating vibrant communities,” Sanpal explains, “positioning Dubai as a global leader in luxury and innovation.”

ANAX Hospitality has reached significant milestones, including its innovative nightlife and dining venues, with plans to introduce a new F&B concept inspired by Japanese hospitality. “We are blending sustainability and exceptional guest experiences to bring something truly unique,” Sanpal says, emphasizing that the expansion into Asia and the Nordic countries provides valuable insights for integrating best practices in sustainability. “Our approach aims to redefine luxury hospitality in Dubai,” he asserts, hinting at more high-caliber venues to come.

Among ANAX Hospitality’s flagship concepts is Secret Garden – Vii, a nightclub divided into The Terrace, The Lounge, and The Nightclub, each with a distinct ambiance. “Each space has a unique vibe,” Sanpal explains, describing how the immersive environment “transports guests into a world of mythos and fantasy.” Such multidimensional spaces set ANAX apart in Dubai’s competitive nightlife scene.

The concept of luxury has evolved significantly, particularly in the Middle East, according to Sanpal. “Luxury is no longer just about exclusivity; it’s about creating personalised, meaningful experiences,” he says. ANAX Hospitality is responding by blending cutting-edge technology with sustainable practices inspired by Asia’s dining culture and the Nordic approach to eco-consciousness. “We’re creating environments where luxury meets responsibility, ensuring a positive impact on both our guests and the environment,” Sanpal adds.

With ANAX Developments transforming Dubai’s skyline and ANAX Hospitality setting new benchmarks, these two arms

of ANAX Holding are enhancing Dubai’s reputation as a premier destination for luxury and innovation. Sanpal observes, “Our dual approach strengthens Dubai’s appeal, making it a magnet for investors and tourists, as well as those who want to call Dubai their ‘new’ home.”

Consumer preferences have changed in recent years, with a marked shift towards experiences that weave together culture, innovation, and environmental consciousness. “People are looking for immersive experiences that leave a lesser footprint,” Sanpal says. ANAX Hospitality meets this demand by adopting farm-to-table and eco-friendly concepts that resonate on multiple levels with today’s conscientious consumers.

The pandemic underscored the importance of agility in hospitality. “ANAX Hospitality is embracing digital solutions and contactless technologies to enhance guest safety and convenience,” Sanpal explains. This agility also informs their architectural approach, as new projects focus on flexible spaces that adapt to evolving guest expectations.

Acknowledging the competitive environment, Sanpal is optimistic about the sector’s future. “By prioritizing innovation and sustainability, businesses can capitalize on Dubai’s mandate to attract tourists and investors,” he says. With this forward-looking mindset, ANAX Holding positions itself as a leader in both real estate and hospitality in Dubai.

ANAX Holding plans to launch several projects, including Vento Tower and developments in Meydan, Al Furjan, and Dubai Islands. “We are committed to setting new benchmarks in real estate and hospitality,” Sanpal affirms, pointing to upcoming ventures that will continue the company’s dedication to excellence and environmental stewardship.

Reflecting on his journey, Sanpal credits his success to a focus on adaptability and sustainable development. “It’s about spotting emerging trends and turning them into strategic opportunities,” he shares, underscoring the importance of innovation across all ANAX ventures. ■

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Occupancy and Room Rates Surge Amid Robust Demand: HVS-ANAROCK

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

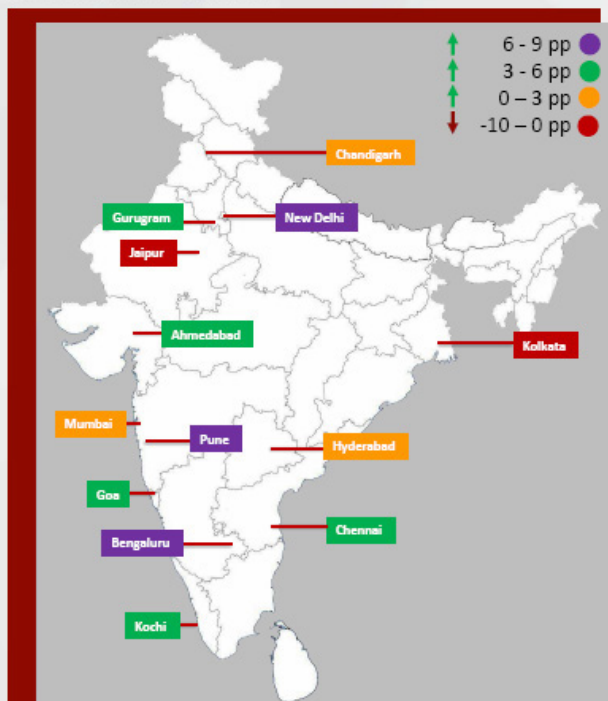
The Indian hospitality sector continued its robust momentum in September 2024, as sustained demand growth drove significant improvements in occupancy rates across several key markets, said HVS-ANAROCK Hospitality Monitor - October '24. This trend underscores a buoyant phase in the industry, as hoteliers benefit from a surge in business and leisure travel alike. Bengaluru emerged as the frontrunner, recording an impressive 8-10 percentage point (pp) year-on-year increase in occupancy rates, which signals the city's burgeoning reputation as a major business and technology hub. New Delhi followed closely with a 6-8 pp rise in occupancy, reflecting its enduring appeal for corporate and leisure travelers. Conversely, Jaipur and Kolkata saw a slight softening in demand, with occupancy rates dipping by around 0-3 pp. This minor decline, however, is viewed as a temporary shift rather than a long-term downturn for these historically popular destinations.

September also witnessed varied patterns in average room rates across major cities. Hyderabad stole the spotlight with a remarkable 22-24% increase year-on-year, driven by growing corporate and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) activity. Mumbai

and Chennai, two key metropolitan markets, each recorded healthy gains of 10-12%, as they continue to solidify their positions as business hubs with burgeoning demand for upscale accommodations. Goa and New Delhi presented contrasting trends, where occupancy rates rose yet average rates decreased. Goa, a perennial favorite for domestic and international tourists, saw a 2-4 pp rise in occupancy alongside a 2-4% drop in average rates, signaling some price corrections aimed at balancing high tourist footfalls. In New Delhi, while occupancy rose by 6-8 pp, a stark decline of 23-25% in average rates compared to last year can be attributed to the absence of a significant G20 summit-related demand, which had previously bolstered prices temporarily.

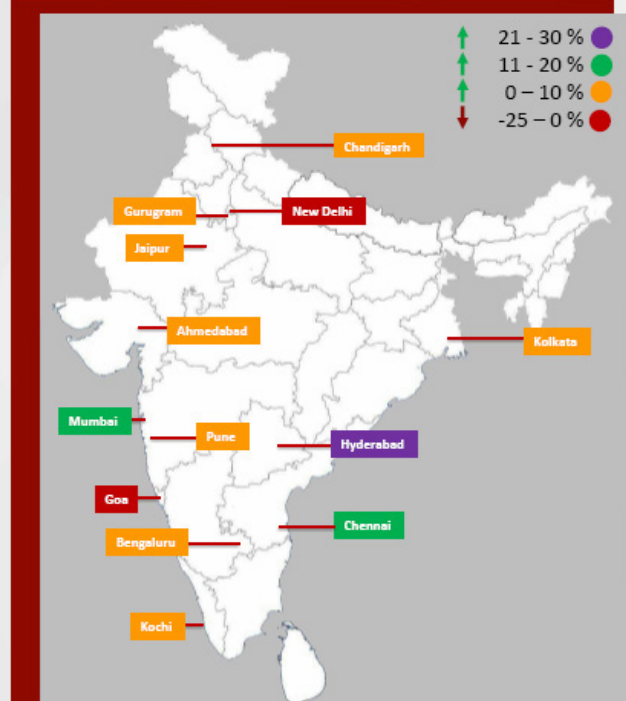
The third quarter of calendar year 2024 (Q3 CY2024) revealed a continued rise in occupancy across most major markets compared to the same period last year, with Mumbai as the sole exception. All major commercial cities, with the exception of New Delhi, demonstrated solid growth in average rates, with Goa again emerging as an outlier due to a dip in rates, possibly influenced by seasonal adjustments and an influx of budget-conscious tourists. This dynamic signals an encouraging demand pattern for hoteliers, as occupancy rates indicate high room uptake even as some markets adjust their pricing strategies to align with shifting traveler preferences.

Occupancy Trends Across Key Indian Markets (September 2024)



Source: HVS Research; year-on-year change; Data for Calendar Year

ARR Trends Across Key Indian Markets (September 2024)

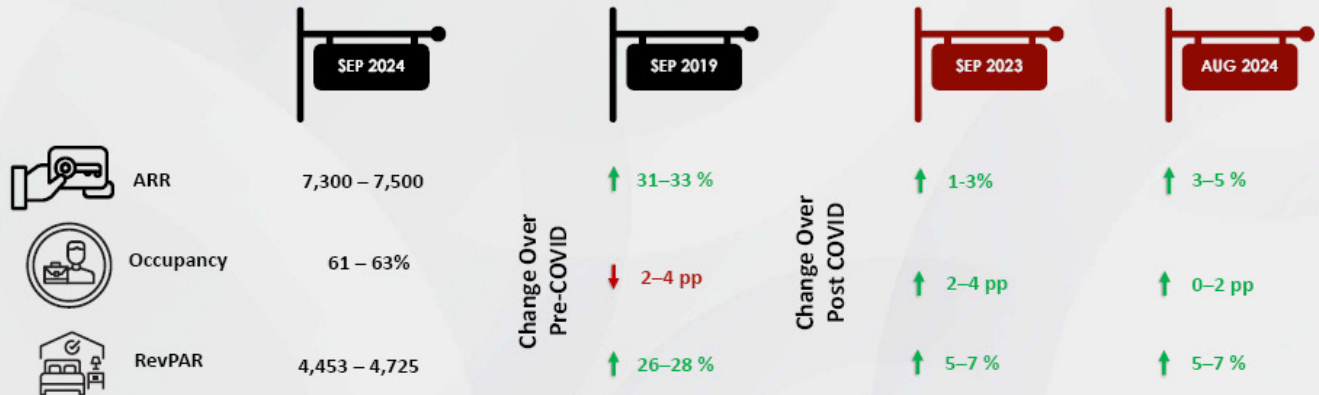


Source: HVS Research; year-on-year change; Data for Calendar Year

India Hotel Sector Performance

(September 2024)

- Occupancy rates in September 2024 witnessed steady year-on-year growth and remained stable compared to August 2024.
- Average Rates (ARR) also continued its upward trajectory, with the year-on-year growth rate now starting to stabilize.



Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year

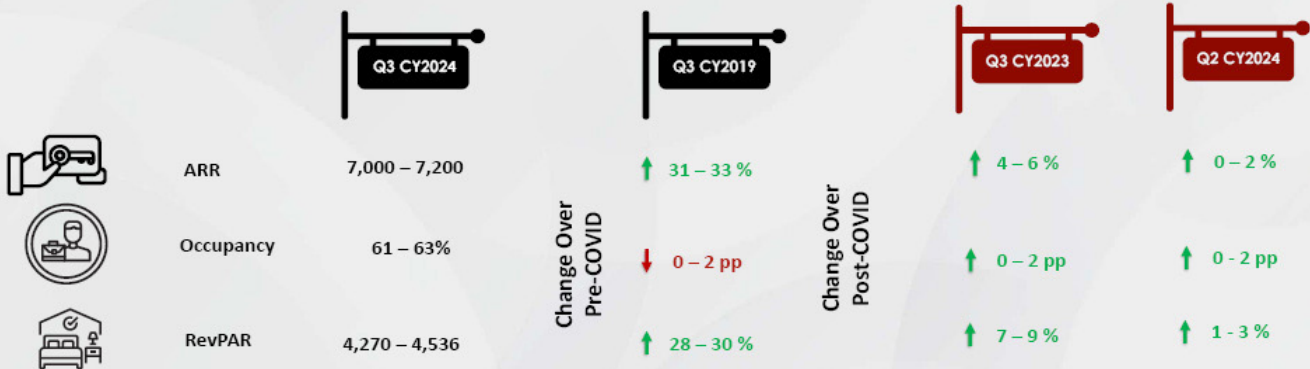
In terms of expansion, the third quarter saw a remarkable momentum in signings, with a total of 9,440 new hotel keys signed across 96 properties. This represents a substantial year-on-year growth of 51% in the number of keys signed, emphasizing the confidence among

hotel operators and developers in the long-term growth of the Indian hospitality sector. As market demand continues to evolve, hoteliers are positioning themselves to capture a larger share of travelers by expanding their footprints across established and emerging destinations. ■

India Hotel Sector Performance

(Q3 CY2024)

- Q3 CY2024 performance saw a recovery with respect to last quarter. Pre-COVID occupancy rates are yet to be crossed.



Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year



Novotel Goa Panjim

With 143 well-appointed rooms, over 8,000 square feet of versatile meeting and event spaces, three dining outlets, a luxurious spa and salon, a state-of-the-art fitness center, and a swimming pool, Novotel Goa Panjim is set to be a preferred destination for both social gatherings and business events. The hotel has already received the prestigious 2024 India's Best Design Award, recognizing its innovative blend of traditional hospitality and relaxed resort-style ambiance.

Mansao Curtorim, CGH Earth Saha

Nestled in the tranquil village of Curtorim, this 223-year-old heritage villa serves as a unique getaway for travellers eager to discover an unexplored side of Goa, all within a serene and unhurried environment of an authentic old-Goan village and the beaches, a 30-min drive away. Mansao Curtorim boasts six elegantly furnished bedrooms, a spacious living room, an exquisite formal dining room as well as a more relaxed outdoor dining area framed by an enchanting courtyard, and balconies that offer breathtaking views of sunrises and sunsets.

The interiors of Mansao Curtorim have been thoughtfully curated with restored colonial furniture, Portuguese-inspired textiles and other intricate details pay tribute to Goa's architectural legacy. From exquisite rosewood beds to ornate mirrors, each piece reflects the region's storied past. A culinary experience at Mansao Curtorim is a celebration of Goa's vibrant and diverse food culture, artfully merging Portuguese and Indian influences. Guests can indulge in a rich variety of flavors through menus crafted for both vegetarian as well as meat and seafood lovers.



Sterling Holiday Resorts, Pench

The 4-acre property is embellished by manicured lawns and flagstone paths and is a green haven, making it an ideal getaway from Nagpur. Located close to and midway between the Khawasa and Khursapar Gate, it can be an ideal base to explore the Pench wildlife sanctuary. The resort has a choice of villa-styled rooms and large Luxury Tents, all equipped with a sit-out for guests to relax and enjoy the serene surroundings especially in the evenings. The rooms give a rustic look from outside, blending well with the surroundings, while they are equipped with all the modern amenities for a comfortable stay. Special features include open-to-sky showers, bathtubs with a separate shower area and premier rooms have a dedicated powder room within and a private lawn space outside.

Club Mahindra Bharatpur

Spread across 10 acres, the resort features 59 elegantly designed rooms including Hotel Units and Studio categories that blend traditional heritage charm with exquisite décor. Guests can savor local and multicuisine delights at the resort's restaurant, which offers local regional, and international cuisine. The resort also boasts a spa, a gym, and a swimming pool for fitness and leisure. The resort provides exclusive banqueting options for special occasions, featuring a sprawling lawn that can accommodate up to 500 guests, offering privacy and elegance for unforgettable events. Club Mahindra Bharatpur's highlight is its proximity to the renowned Keoladeo National Park, one of India's most famous bird sanctuaries. Home to over 370 bird species, the park makes the resort a haven for nature lovers and birdwatchers. The sight of peacocks roaming freely around the resort adds to the unique, serene experience for guests.



ACCOR HOTELS

**Gagan Katya, Director of Sales, Fairmont Jaipur**

With over two decades of extensive experience in sales and marketing, Gagan brings a wealth of knowledge and a proven track record in driving strategic growth and elevating brand presence in the luxury hospitality sector.

Before joining Fairmont Jaipur, Gagan held several leadership roles in prestigious brands, including Ananta Hotels & Resorts, ITC Rajputana Jaipur, and Marriott International. At

Fairmont Jaipur, Gagan will oversee the sales department, driving both inbound and outbound sales strategies to further strengthen the hotel's position as a leading luxury destination. He will also play a pivotal role in fostering client relationships, elevating Fairmont Jaipur as a preferred venue for weddings, conferences, and high-profile events.

ATOMSPHERE CORE

**Milan Mookerjee, Atmosphere Core, Vice President of Human Resources**

With over 15 years of industry experience, Milan is a seasoned professional known for aligning HR initiatives with business goals and fostering a human-centric culture.

Veteran Human Resources leader, Milan Mookerjee will oversee talent management and

employee growth initiatives across the Atmosphere Core's resorts in the Maldives.

CHALET HOTELS

**Shwetank Singh, Executive Director, Chalet Hotels Limited**

In his enhanced role, Shwetank will continue to lead functions of projects, design and business development and will also spearhead the teams of operations and asset management. In addition, Shwetank will also oversee CHL's Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives. An alumnus of

Faculty of Management Studies (FMS) with an MBA in Finance and Marketing, Shwetank has held key leadership positions at some of the best globally recognised organisations.

Aaruni Dwivedi, Hotel Manager, Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai

With an illustrious 17-year career in luxury hospitality, Dwivedi brings a wealth of global experience and expertise to his new role as Hotel Manager at Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai. In this capacity, he will oversee hotel operations, reinforcing the brand's commitment to delivering the highest standards of luxury and service. A seasoned leader in

operations, Aaruni has worked at top-rated Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts across the APAC, EMEA, and Americas regions. His extensive background in operations management, process optimization, and guest experience enhancement will be instrumental in elevating guest experiences at Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai.

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

**Amit Kumar, Executive Chef, The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat**

With over 14 years of culinary expertise spanning prestigious Marriott International properties, Chef Kumar brings a wealth of knowledge and creativity to his new role. His journey in the culinary world reflects a passion for innovation, quality, and elevating dining experiences. In his new position at The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat, Chef Amit will lead the culinary team to curate an extraordinary dining experience

across the hotel's restaurants, banquets, and in-room services. Milan Mookerjee joins the Atmosphere Core as the Vice President of Human Resources.

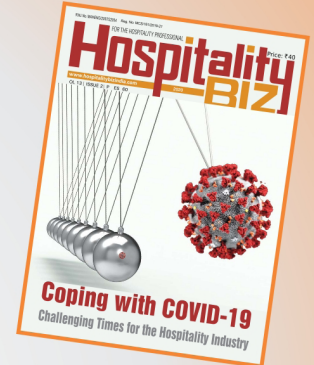
MAYFAIR HOTELS & RESORTS

**Nelson Sumit Gomes, Assistant General Manager - Marketing, MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts**

Bringing a wealth of experience and expertise in the hospitality sector, Nelson is set to play a pivotal role in enhancing the brand's marketing efforts, further solidifying Mayfair's footprint across the nation. Throughout his career, Nelson has excelled in crafting and executing innovative marketing strategies that not only

enhanced brand visibility but also fostered meaningful guest engagement. His expertise in digital marketing, brand management, and market analysis will be pivotal in advancing the Mayfair brand and navigating the complexities of ever-evolving dynamics.

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