

HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA fhrainmagazine

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A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE
By DDP Publications

SAY
NO
TO
FAKE
NEWS



**Expectations
from BUDGET**

**REINVENTING &
REBUILDING**

MSME SCHEMES

Emerald Cave, Black Canyon





Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President
FHRAI

Dear fellow members,

Approaching 2021, I would like to have an overview of 2020 which was a write-off. Initially we saw confusion, fear, lockdowns, amongst other things as neither us nor the govt knew what we were dealing with. Moving a few months into the pandemic, the seriousness of the situation dawned on all of us, teaching us lessons we will never forget. It has taught us first how to be self-reliant, to operate with minimum staff efficiently and to reduce costs. Most importantly it has taught us never to undermine hygiene, ever. FHRAI has been at the forefront in this pandemic, through its four regional arms and has been working overtime, interacting with the Central and the various state governments. Due to our regional arms taking up their issues strongly and persistently with the various state governments, many of them were quite responsive & we have succeeded in getting many region-specific reliefs.

Though the Maharashtra govt had announced industry status for hospitality in 1999, it was not implemented. After continuous representations from FHRAI and HRAWI, we could convince the present government, who understood the problems and has granted industry status to hospitality, with all the benefits from 2021.

All eyes are on the 2021 budget. We are in talks with the Finance and Commerce ministries and pre-budget recommendations have already gone from FHRAI. This budget needs to take a good, hard look at hospitality and tourism and we hope at least this time, the govt will not yet again, disappoint the industry.

Our neighbours like UAE, some Far East Asian countries, Sri Lanka, Maldives are making hay while the sun shines. While travel continues to be restricted within the country and as fears and confusion surmount, those desperate to get away are heading to the above destinations. This

not only means losing out on domestic travellers but also means foreign exchange has gone out. The government needs to take a wake-up call and decide now, time being of essence.

Just as restaurants were getting back into the survival mode with guests trickling in, knee-jerk reactions from certain state governments announcing night curfews and a retraction in operating hours due to the mutated strain having arisen in Europe, has created chaos again. While there is no restriction of vehicular travel for five or less passengers within cities, gathering of more than five at restaurants and hotels is restricted. We have appealed to the governments, to relook this decision. You will be glad to know, the govts of Karnataka & Madhya Pradesh have already lifted the night curfew and restrictions and we are hopeful that other states will also follow suit. We have also written to countries and their embassies to withdraw travel advisories against travel to India. With the news of the vaccine finally being available, I optimistically and sincerely hope, wish and look forward to a much better 2021 where we would be able to put all this behind us and begin afresh. I wish you and all your families, a happy, prosperous and a very safe New Year. God bless our great country.

Be safe.

Note: The December 2020 edition of the FHRAI magazine will not be available as a printed version due to the pandemic. However, the e-version of the same shall be available on the FHRAI website and circulated to all members as broadcast on registered email.

With kind regards,

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI



With the news of the vaccine finally being available, I look forward to a much better 2021 where we would be able to begin afresh



DECEMBER 2020

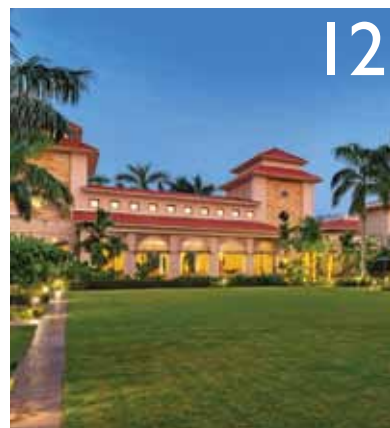
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Industry leaders talked about how to navigate the marketplace at a virtual session of the India International Hospitality Expo (IHE).

COVER IMAGE:

MYSORE PALACE, MYSURU, KARNATAKA, INDIA



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SECRETARY GENERAL

Jaison Chacko - sg@fhrai.com

PUBLISHER

Devika Jeet - devika@ddppl.com

SENIOR CORRESPONDENT

Neha Rawat - neha.rawat@ddppl.com

DESK EDITOR

Smita Kulshreshth -
smita.kulshreshth@ddppl.com

CREATIVE DESIGN

Raashi Ajmani Girdhar

MARKETING & SALES - DELHI

Nikhil Jeet - Nikhil.jeet@ddppl.com
Director Advertising (+91 9910031313)

Gaganpreet Kaur - gaganpreet@ddppl.com
Marketing Manager (+919650399934)

Ankit Endlaw - ankit.endlaw@ddppl.com
Manager Sales (+919650399928)

MUMBAI

Harshal Ashar - harshal@ddppl.com
General Manager (+919619499167)

Priyanshu Wankhade - priyanshu@ddppl.com
Manager Advertising (+919619499170)

SOUTH

Shradha Kapoor - shradha.kapoor@ddppl.com
Assistant Manager (+918179792492)

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Anil Kharbanda

ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNERS

Vikas Mandotia
Nitin Kumar

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While the Northeast has become a popular pick for workcations, there are a few challenges in restarting full-fledged tourism, says Bjorn DeNiese, a Northeast Tourism Specialist.



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FHRAI

B-82, 8th Floor, Himalaya House
Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi 110001
Tel: 91-11-40780780, Fax: +91-11-40780777
Email: fhrai@fhrai.com

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Editor: Devika Jeet

Email: fhraimag@ddppl.com
Tel: +919818767141

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Loan restructuring needed

The hospitality and tourism sector needs to be protected to prevent its assets from becoming non-performing, says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

Hotels and restaurants in India are once again on the edge with fears of state-wise lockdowns due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases. The hospitality industry has been engulfed in massive losses and mounting debts since the pandemic hit the country. In view of this, the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) is seeking a sector-specific loan restructuring plan from the government.

The association has opined that loan extensions should be given to the hospitality sector on similar lines as those given under the Prime Minister's scheme for loans below ₹25 crores for SMEs and MSMEs. Provisioning this, the association has asserted, is the need of the hour for saving the hospitality industry from an almost imminent collapse.

"The hospitality and tourism sector is not a risk to the Indian banking system and needs to be protected to prevent its assets from becoming non-performing. With existing travel restrictions, in February 2020, 1.01 million foreign tourists arrived in India compared to 1.08 million in February 2019, registering a year-on-year decrease of 6.6 per cent already. Since then, until date, there are no FTAs and are not expected anytime in the near future with fears of a second wave.

The total value at risk to the entire economy is close to ₹10 lakh crores with more than 50 per cent job losses within the industry. There is a justifiable fear that most of the hospitality businesses companies in this industry would be unable to service their financial obligations and eventually slip into the most distressed category. Owing to this, the industry desperately seeks support from the government. and hopes that the government will soon make sector-specific tweaking in the policy to allow hospitality establishments to benefit from loan restructuring," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

Over the 18 months from March 2018 till September 2019, the Gross Bank Credit by



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

The total value at risk to the entire economy is close to ₹10 lakh crores



Manav Goyal
Dir, Adyar Gate Hotels

We are a highly labour and capital-intensive business

the banks and financial institutions stood at ₹83,99,196 cr which as on September 2019 increased by 14 per cent to ₹95,57,487 cr – an increase of ₹11,58,291 cr. The total outstanding to the service sector was ₹25,30,553 cr while the credit for tourism,

hotels and restaurants sector was ₹56,766 cr which is only 0.58 per cent of the total deployment of Gross Bank Credit.

While the total Gross Bank Credit has increased in the country, the share of tourism, hotels and restaurants sector has come down from the 18-month period from 0.62 per cent to 0.43 per cent in the current financial year.

"Hospitality industry is a complex mix of logistics, supply chain, inventory management, kitchen production, and services and entertainment. Unlike traditional manufacturing industries, hotels require huge investments and capital outlays to set up and upgrade products, service design and technology. We are a highly labour and capital-intensive business with long gestation periods of 15 to 20 years. Hence, when our industry is pegged against other sectors for lending, it is inequitable and not appropriate," says **Manav Goyal**, Director, Adyar Gate Hotels, Chennai.

FHRAI has stated that if a favourable policy is not drawn for survival of the hospitality sector then at least 40 to 50 per cent restaurants and 30 to 40 per cent hotels in the country will shut down, resulting in millions of job losses.

"Businesses are steadily closing and the NPAs too are rising. Conservative projections show estimated revenues of only ₹36,400 cr against a total revenue of ₹1.82 lakh cr in FY 2019-20. This translates to a revenue loss of ₹1.14 lakh cr.

The total loan outstanding to the hospitality industry is ₹55,000 cr and the value at risk for the hospitality and tourism sector is at approximately ₹10 lakh cr without accounting for a second lockdown and its repercussions. In such a scenario, the hospitality sector needs government support through a sector-specific loan restructuring plan. This will save many small and medium-size businesses from imminent and permanent closure," concludes **Pradeep Shetty**, Jt Hon Secretary, FHRAI.



‘Relax curfew timings’

FHRAI’s letter to **Capt. Amarinder Singh**, Hon’ble Chief Minister of Punjab, requested for relaxations in the curfew timings for hotels, restaurants and banquet halls.

On behalf of FHRAI, the letter was written by **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President of the association. The letter stated, “This is in reference to the recent announcement of the Punjab Government imposing night curfew from 10 pm to 5 am and thereupon directing the hotels, restaurants and banquet halls to close from 9.30 pm from December 1, 2020.

As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant and far-reaching economic damage to the hospitality industry in the country. Zero business during the first seven months of lockdown, negative cash flows, threats of insolvency and millions of jobs losses have devastated the sector completely. The hospitality establishments are struggling to restart or sustain their operations due to negative cash flows.”

The letter went on to say, “The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) – the apex association of 55, 000 hotels and 5,00,000 restaurants in the country estimates that nearly 25 per cent in hospitality sector will permanently shut down before the end of the current Financial Year. In this very volatile economic condition, the sector has been pinning hopes on the



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

Sudden change in the guidelines would create unnecessary trouble

wedding season beginning December to keep the business afloat. But the threat of COVID-19 still looms large, resulting in a lot of additional restrictions which have shattered all our hopes. Complying to the Unlock 5 guidelines, people have booked their events at various venues and these additional guidelines have come as a big blow to all

our survival efforts. The venues capacities have already been limited by the government and sudden change in the guidelines would create unnecessary trouble in operations for the establishment and inconvenience for the elders attending the events. We would therefore request you to extend the following relaxations in the curfew timings for hotels, restaurants and banquet halls in the state:

- Those attending a wedding be allowed to have a comfortable meal and close family members be allowed to attend the wedding rituals post 9.30 pm.
- Guests coming to hotels, restaurants and banquet halls be allowed to finish their meals and leave comfortably post 9.30 pm.
- No new guests will be allowed to enter their premises after 9.30 pm”

“The hospitality sector has steadfastly stood with the government and extended all our support to combat the pandemic in the state and is committed to follow all safety and health protocols with utmost seriousness. We humbly request you to consider this request of the hospitality sector favourably,” the letter concluded.



Plea for industry status

FHRAI has requested the Govt of Telangana to adopt the model of Maharashtra state and accord industry status and corresponding benefits to the hospitality sector in Telangana.



D V S Soma Raju

On behalf of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), **D V S Soma Raju**, Hony. Treasurer wrote to **Sri V. Srinivas Goud**, Hon'ble Youth Services, Tourism & Culture and Archaeology Minister, government of Telangana, requesting to grant industry status to hospitality sector in Telangana.

The letter stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant and far-reaching economic damage to the hospitality sector in the country. The sector is waging a battle for its survival amidst increasing requirements of working capital vis-a-vis negative cash flows, threats of insolvency and millions of jobs losses. The morale of the sector is at an all-time low. In these challenging circumstances, a silver lining has appeared for the sector in the form of a landmark decision by the government of Maharashtra of granting industrial status and corresponding benefits to the hospitality sector in the state as well as the decision to reduce the number of licenses through the introduction of one window system.

The key features of the decision of the Maharashtra government are the following:

- Eligible hotels will be charged at industrial rates for power supply, water supply, taxes and dues instead of the commercial rates that are currently applicable.
- For additional floor space index (FSI), establishments will be charged at industrial rates.
- All the facilities and incentives applicable to industries will be applicable to the hospitality sector as well.
- The government also decided that it will require just 10 licences to start a hospitality business in Maharashtra, down from 70, less than a month ago.

The letter reiterated that the government of Telangana has been always been at the forefront with progressive measures and policies aimed at socio-economic development in the state, and its pioneering efforts in ease of doing business have shown the way forward for the other states in the country to follow.

It stated, "We would therefore request you to adopt the model of the government of Maharashtra and accord industry status and corresponding benefits to the hospitality sector in the state of Telangana as well. This decision can go a long way in bringing ease of doing business while ensuring level-playing field in the hospitality sector. Moreover, this will definitely give immense strength to the survival efforts of the hospitality sector. We humbly request you to consider this request favourably and extend the much-needed support to the hospitality sector at this time of deep crisis."



Telangana govt's efforts in ease of doing business have shown the way forward

'A mere extension'

The extension on the ECLGS is welcome but the industry can't be revived with just this benefit alone, says **GS Kohli**, VP, FHRAI.

FHRAI has welcomed the extension on Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) but expressed disappointment on not being offered a hospitality specific stimulus package.

According to the industry body, the ECLGS is merely a timeframe extension on an existing scheme and does not do much good for the distressed hospitality sector. The FM announced that the ECLGS has been extended until March 31, 2021 and along with it the tenor of credit has been extended to five years, including one-year moratorium on principal repayment.

"The ECLGS is the only respite that the industry has received from the government so far. We cannot stress this enough, that hospitality is not like other industries. It is highly capital and labour intensive and without a specific and robust stimulus, the sector will continue to



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

Without a robust stimulus the sector will continue to bleed

bleed. Yes, the extension on the ECLGS is a welcome relief but the industry can't be revived with just this benefit alone," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

The FHRAI has also pointed out that the extension offers only a marginal benefit to the industry. The industry has instead pinned hopes on the FM making sector-specific tweaking to allow hospitality establishments to benefit from loan restructuring. "The hospitality industry is eligible for loan restructuring, however the banks are reluctant to service us. This is because our business, unlike businesses in other industries, is seasonal. A normal course of business for us is seen as bad business in the book of accounts by the banks. A mere extension, without addressing the lack of implementation and apathy of the banks is pointless," says Pradeep Shetty, Jt. Hon Secretary, FHRAI.

Generating ancillary revenue

Regional Presidents stress on the need for govt to make sector-specific tweaking in the new debt restructuring policy to allow hospitality establishments to benefit from loan restructuring.

The hospitality industry is going through the worst crisis in recent history. With nearly zero business for months, some of the members are on the verge of going bust. "Our repeated appeals for moratoriums on loan repayment and relaxation on interest rates on loans to the Central and governments have failed to evoke any response," says **Sudesh Poddar**, President, HRAEI.

"In absence of any stimulus from the government, we are being forced to think out of the box. Hotels are 'repurposing' multiple spaces in the property to make them revenue generating," adds Poddar.

Some of the star-rated properties in Kolkata have come up with some novel ideas now that revenues are pretty low. Novotel Kolkata offered their state-of-the-art banquet venues



Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI

With no govt stimulus, we are being forced to think out of the box

as office space for corporates to use as workstations. During this period, Novotel also launched 'Pop Up Apartment' restaurant – an exclusive private dining opportunity in a well-equipped and ALLSAFE serviced apartment where contactless procedures are followed to enhance the dining experience. The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat started tapping their property for many movie shootings. Movie crews from both local and outside camp in the hotel and carry out shooting. They also introduced Kolkata Bread Company (KBC) that brings the best of bakery assortments and health breads.

"Innovations are going to stay and keep on generating revenue even after the pandemic. We have learnt once again that necessity is the mother of all inventions. I have urged all our members to keep on innovating in the days to come," says Poddar.

Reinventing & rebuilding

Industry leaders talked about how to navigate the marketplace at a virtual session of the India International Hospitality Expo (IHE).



Manas Dwivedi



Rajiv Kaul
Advisor
Leela Palaces Hotels &
Resorts

As hotel managers, we need to focus on achieving breakeven as an immediate goal. While the vaccine will have its own trajectory, we will have ups and downs, but we need to take full advantage of all the mirco-opportunities for growth. This is the single most important thing, which general managers should focus on. Secondly, we need to ensure that jobs are not lost. Livelihood protection is a key thing and we need to seriously work towards protecting our human resources.



Anil Chadha
COO,
ITC Hotels

We have moved from the phase of conquering to co-existing. The new normal is the new world for both associates and guests. Hygiene, health and safety are the new buzzwords. We are going through very tough times but are preparing ourselves for the battle. We need to make our entire model efficient in every respect. We have learned so much on cost lines. We have to survive for at least the next 12-18 months. How do you drive the customer back to your hotel? This is the challenge. We really need to think out of the box.



KB Kachru
Chairman, Emeritus &
Principal Advisor
South Asia, Radisson
Hotel Group

We all have to accept that the hospitality market has shrunk. We have seen losses amounting to ₹90,000 crore. Although we have green shoots of revival, but I still think significant recovery will not be seen before end of 2022 or early 2023. To stay afloat, we have to look at two things. First, we have to reinvent ourselves, retool our resources and second, we need to focus on what the government is doing for us. Unfortunately, the Indian hospitality industry has not been acknowledged by the government, the way it should have been. The trend is changing. You have to accept what is needed; what domestic tourism can do to you. MICE is going to be the most impacted. We have to rethink in terms of designing and rebuilding.

We have to accept the new normal. From government, it is important to receive industry status in all the states.



Dilip Puri
Founder & CEO
Indian School of Hospitality

For me, COVID-19 has not just been a trauma, it has been a humanitarian crisis, but the industry unfortunately doesn't want to accept it. Some people are hyping job losses. I think the industry needs to confront it, accept it and needs to have a strategy on what to do about it. As an educator, parents question us saying, should our kids even study hospitality? What is the future of the industry? If that is the crisis today, then whenever the industry will come back to normal, there will be no one wanting to work in the industry. When it comes to rescaling, it is an opportunity because hospitality is the only industry which provides transferable skills, so we need to upscale the talent to be prepared for a multitude of tasks and efficiency to work in others sectors dependent on hospitality. If the industry doesn't take this crisis seriously, ultimately it will be the industry only who will suffer when the recovery happens.



Sonica Malhotra
Kandhari
Joint Managing Director
MBD Group

The stress in the hospitality industry was even felt in the form of some tremors prior to COVID as well. Before COVID started, more than 50 per cent of the hospitality players were feeling stress on their balance sheets. Ultimately, COVID has worsened the scenario. If this crisis continues for another year, the mortality rate in the industry will see skyrocketing numbers. 90 per cent of the players have not been able to take benefit of the interest-free loans provided by the government since they are not eligible in the parameter set by them. So with stress on balance sheet, demand going south, less government support, the 'Make in India' initiative will also take a hit in the industry as this will give an opportunity to cash-rich, private equity funds/hospitality funds, who are probably putting money in picking up stressed assets in India. This way, ownership by Indians in hospitality industry is going to go down dramatically.

Expectations from BUDGET 2021-22

FHRAI EC members highlight the need for soft loans with subsidised interest rates, allocating more funds for the tourism sector & granting industry status to hospitality.



Neha Rawat



S K Mohapatra

S K Mohapatra
Executive Director, Mayfair Hotels and Resorts

Coming in the backdrop of the worst crisis that the tourism and hospitality industry has ever witnessed, expectations will be very high from the Union Budget 2021-22. Though the threat of COVID-19 is gradually subsiding, crippled by its devastating impact, the road to revival is still out of sight. A comprehensive stimulus package that will help us stand back firmly on our feet is what we expect from the Union government.

In line with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's call to the people of the country to visit 15 domestic tourist destinations in India by 2022, we expect that the Budget would include some major policy incentives to promote domestic travel. The govt should reconsider its decision to redirect the LTC money of government employees to buy consumer goods as it

will adversely hit the business prospects of our industry. Further, apart from restoring the LTC, providing income tax exemption up to ₹1.5 lakh against travelling expenses is something which must be taken into consideration.

On the tax front, we expect a rationalisation of rates across all categories of services. We cannot be a global leader in the field of tourism with such a high tax rate i.e., 18 per cent as against the 10-12 per cent globally. A tax cut, especially during this unprecedented crisis, will be of great relief to the industry. A uniform tax rate of 12 per cent should be considered with a roadmap of eventually bringing it down to 10 per cent. Other measures that we expect include provision of soft loans for our industry with subsidised interest rates, allocating more funds for the tourism sector, granting the much-needed infrastructure and industry status to all hospitality projects over ₹50 crore, & incentivising the establishment of hospitality projects in underdeveloped destinations of the country.



We cannot be a global leader in tourism with a tax rate of 18%





Does
your hotel
have a
COVID
compliance
certificate?





Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar

Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar Executive Director, HRH Group of Hotels

The upcoming Budget is likely to be presented by the finance minister on February 1, 2021. More importantly, the Budget will have to address critical issues pertaining to growth because the COVID crisis has adversely impacted all segments of the economy, including revenue collection, disinvestment, exports and food prices. In a recent interview to one of the leading dailies, the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman hinted that the Union Budget 2021-22 will try to script the growth narrative by focussing on infrastructure and reforms amid the urgency to push economic growth hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Talking about tax concessions, she said, "We have extended a lot of tax concessions for sovereign funds. When they come, they come after exhaustive study of what is being provided and then look for long-term sustainable investment opportunities. So, all this is getting linked to the National Investment Pipeline, where 7,000 projects have been identified after rigorous work in 2019. Once money goes into infrastructure, it has a very strong multiplier effect."

When asked about the review of distress in the corporate sector and bank balance sheets, she said, "I am monitoring banks. Because we could extend timely

working capital, many who could have faced severe stress have just held up. Many have gone back to business and it is reflecting in the GST and PMI numbers. Banks are also open-minded. With liquidity being fairly easily available, stressed companies will survive."

According to me, Budget 2021-22 needs to take an overview of the hospitality industry, putting the focus on all the segments of the industry. That is the first challenge. The second challenge is, understanding the financial requirements of all the players in each segment.

As there has been no revenue generation, quite obviously everyone is facing cash flow problems. The government needs to address this specific problem and ensure we have cash on hand to honour our payments. We are in need of a 'direct transfer' that can benefit us all, and equally.

Industry associations, seniors of our industry will have to think and act like statesmen if they are going to provide a lifeline for today and tomorrow.

State governments also have a big role to play in identifying all the key segments and players who need financial assistance or tax holidays.

These are major issues, I find myself woefully inadequate to address these financial and taxation matters. But I hope we have the right, positive intent and energy to address this unbelievable global crisis. Let's say Jai Hind to that!



The budget needs to take an overview of the hospitality industry





Is your
covid certificate
authenticated
by the
national board
of the country?





Param Kannampilly

Param Kannampilly **Chairman and Managing Director, Concept Hospitality**

Let me start this by saying that I have been associated with the hospitality industry for the last four decades. In all of this time, I have never witnessed this sort of carnage. The kind of blood bath the hospitality industry has witnessed worldwide has been unprecedented. These are extraordinary times for the industry and they require some unparalleled solutions.

Unfortunately, it would be wishful thinking to expect something good from this year's Budget. Time and time again the government has disappointed the industry. There was absolutely nothing in last year's Budget for the hospitality industry. Remember those were good times and COVID had not hit the country. So the hoteliers took the last Budget on their chin and kept on doing business as they have been doing, knowing fully well that the onus on doing business lies on individual hoteliers and the industry.

This year is however totally different, millions of people associated with the hospitality industry have lost jobs. In addition to the deadly human toll and the disruptions to millions of lives, the economic damage is already significant and far-reaching.

Hospitality being a labour- and capital-intensive industry which is dependent on travel, was the first casualty of

the pandemic and it will be the last sector to revive. The hospitality industry of the country is at the crossroads today and facing an existential crisis as the foreign exchange earnings are nil, and the domestic earnings are also not even 10 per cent of our pre-COVID revenues. Hospitality sector is unlikely to achieve even 25 per cent of pre-COVID revenues till such time we come back to normalcy.

The general public is wary of travelling. Add to it various diktats which various state governments keep on imposing, which add further confusion in the minds of the travellers who are planning any journey. The government can help in implementing a uniform policy as far as travelling regulations are concerned.

The Budget can provide a lot of relief to the hoteliers, if the government decides to give relief on interest payment. As hospitality is a capital-intensive industry, it requires a lot of money to build a hotel and a large chunk as working capital. The cash flow has dried up and hoteliers are facing enormous difficulties in servicing the loans.

Recently the tourism minister of Maharashtra granted industry status to the hospitality industry. Though it was long overdue, still it was a step in the right direction.

The Union government can take a leaf out of that and grant industry status to hospitality. This can be the first step towards taking the hospitality industry seriously and giving it its due.



Hoteliers are facing difficulties in servicing the loans





Do you have
a **Global**
recognition
for
Covid safety?





Exploring tie-ups

G Kamala Vardhana Rao, Chairman & MD, ITDC, talks about their preparedness before opening and other initiatives that the PSU is undertaking to revive and reinvent itself.



Nisha Verma



G K Vardhana Rao

What helped you sail through the lockdown?

At ITDC, we have been standing together as a team and working to support government initiatives, while implementing multiple proactive and precautionary measures to contain the threat caused by the pandemic. To support frontline healthcare workers of government hospitals during lockdown, ITDC provided 2,000 cooked and packed meals daily, prepared in our flagship hotel - The Ashok. Samrat Hotel provided quarantine accommodation to repatriates returning on Vande Bharat Mission flights. ITDC also contributed Rs22.50 lakh towards PM-CARES fund.

CATERER FOR PARLIAMENT

ITDC has been entrusted with the responsibility of being the official caterer for Parliament House, including their various buildings, offices & canteens. The team at ITDC is well-equipped to provide highest standards of service and has deployed experienced officers at the unit. Staff is trained to operate in the new normal & will adhere to strict protocols.

How has business been since opening, in terms of occupancy and MICE?

We have the advantage of a large inventory of rooms and banqueting space, which can be leveraged for maintaining social distancing and room turnaround norms to the benefit of our guests. There have already been days when every banquet venue was booked – a closed date in today's times. Demand for room business is also picking up and will stabilise in a few months from now. When guests feel safe, they travel. Once they experience our services and commitment towards their safety, they spread the word and return. Additionally, we are exploring long-term tie-ups with people and corporates who want to take up rooms or even an entire wing of the hotel for long-term or alternate use.

Could you tell us about new initiatives at ITDC?

In order to reinvent itself with the changing scenario, ITDC, besides consolidating its remaining business, has further diversified into new service-oriented business activities. ITDC signed an MoU with the Andhra Pradesh government in the areas of skill development. In addition, Ashok Tours & Travels is expanding its business of ticketing and cargo handling by signing MOUs with various organisations. The Ashok Events division also conducted multiple hybrid events for various ministries. We are also looking at expanding our Duty-Free business at seaports. A new shop is in the pipeline for early 2021, and we are in talks for larger spaces at some of the existing shops.



ITDC signed an MoU with Andhra Pradesh govt in areas of skill development





Government of India



**Ministry of Commerce
& Industry**



**QCI
Quality Council of India**



**NABCB
National Accreditation
Board of Certification
Bodies**



QualStar

Spike in occupancy across major markets

HVS ANAROCK's recent Hotels & Hospitality Overview shares stats on the India average across the hotel sector, occupancy, RevPAR change & hotel signings in October 2020.

HOTEL SECTOR

Key Stats (India Average)

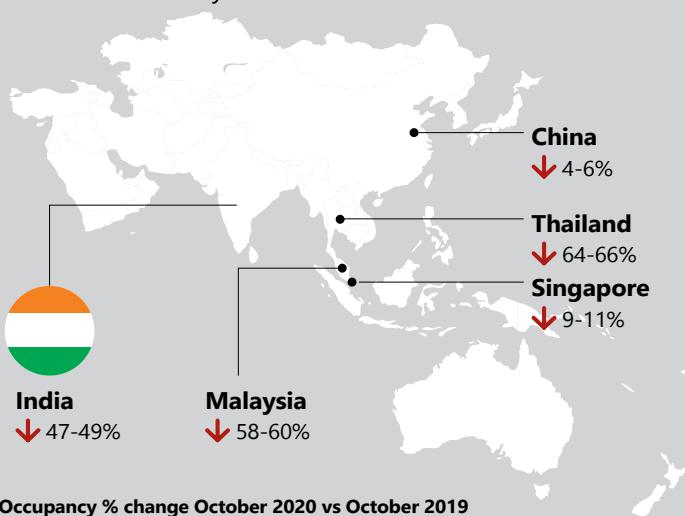


	OCT 2020	M-o-M (%)	Y-o-Y (%)	OCT 2020	SEP 2020	AUG 2020	JUL 2020
ADR	₹3,700 - ₹3,900	↑ 6-8%	ADR	↓ 31-33%	↓ 29-31%	↓ 29-31%	↓ 36-38%
Occupancy	29% - 31%	↑ 20-22%	Occupancy	↓ 47-49%	↓ 59-61%	↓ 60-62%	↓ 62-64%
RevPAR	₹1,070 - ₹1,210	↑ 29-31%	RevPAR	↓ 64-66%	↓ 71-73%	↓ 72-74%	↓ 76-78%

Source: HVS Research

OCCUPANCY CHANGE¹

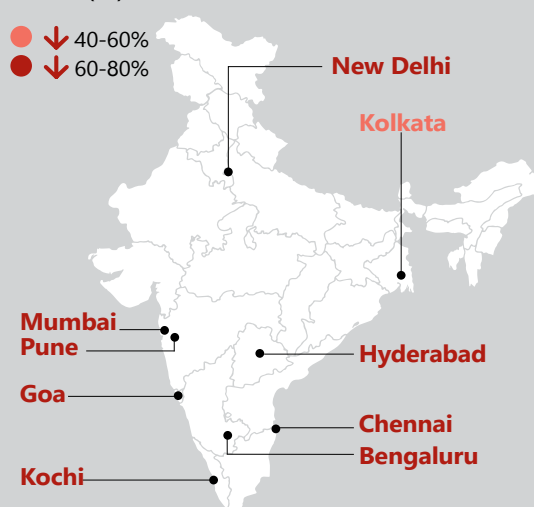
India & Other Key Asian Markets



¹Occupancy % change October 2020 vs October 2019

REVPAR CHANGE

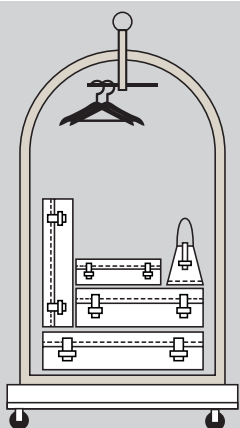
Y-o-Y (%) October 2020



Source: HVS Research

BRANDED HOTELS²

Openings & Signings in October 2020



By Keys



By Properties

Openings

6

578

Signings

5

300

Data collated by HVS from 15 Hotel Operators as of 25th November 2020.

Source: HVS Research

**The
only
accredited
Covid
compliance
certification
body
in
India**



QualSTAR
COVID COMPLIANCE

In accordance with ISO/IEC 17065:2012

**Reach out to us for your
Covid compliance
certificate**



NABCB Accreditation

India's first NABCB Accredited certification
Body for Hotels COVID Compliance

NABCB (Nation accreditation Board for certification bodies) constituent board of QCI (Quality Council of India) an autonomous body under the Department for promotion of industry and internal trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

+91 70420 71995,
+91 9910031313, +91 98187 67141,
info@qualstar.co.in
meenakshi.bairagi@qualstar.co.in

Understanding MSME schemes



Neha Rawat

FHRAI in association with HRANI, organised a webinar to educate members about the various schemes and policies of the Ministry of MSME and the means of availing them.



Surendra Kumar Jaiswal



The Ministry must provide a facilitative environment for hospitality



Among the speakers at the webinar were **Manoj Sharma**, Assistant Director of Ministry of MSME, and **Dr. HP Kumar**, former CMD of National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC), who spoke on how the hospitality industry can jumpstart their businesses with the help of Ministry of MSME, which offers more than 70 schemes for this sector. The Chief Guest for the webinar was **Anand Sherkhane**, Additional Development Commissioner, Ministry of MSME.

Inaugurating the session, **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, Vice President, FHRAI & President, HRANI, said, "My heartiest welcome to all of you to this webinar that is jointly organised by FHRAI and HRANI on 'How can Hospitality Sector Benefit from the Various Schemes and Programmes of the Ministry of MSME'. During these turbulent times, FHRAI and HRANI have been working tirelessly for the benefit of the members. Since the beginning of the lockdown, FHRAI and HRANI have left

no stone unturned in making our industry's voice heard with the government at various levels, continuously appealing for and working towards support for survival and revival of the industry. We are very happy to share that the MSME Ministry has been the most forthcoming and supportive to our industry."

"Among all the gloom and doom of the pandemic as well as the not so encouraging response from the government, the only respite the industry got was through the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) of the MSME Ministry. The ministry has also extended this scheme to March 31, 2021. Apart from the ECLGS, there are many other schemes and programmes of the Ministry of MSME which can help the stressed MSMEs in their revival process. It has become all the more important to sensitise the hospitality sector about all these schemes and programmes from the perspective of the recent development of bringing the service sector under the MSME definition. Today's webinar is being organised with this objective in mind. We look forward

to the Ministry of MSME to provide a more facilitative environment for the hospitality sector under its ambit by considering the fact that the sector is one of the badly affected ones due to the pandemic. We earnestly hope that this sensitisation webinar would provide the much-needed information and capacity enhancement to our members to take up their battle with more vigour and vitality," added Jaiswal.

Manoj Sharma, Assistant Director, Ministry of MSME explained the entire concept of services under MSME and the eligible criteria for registration. He explained the modified definition of MSME sector, it has no demarcation between MSME and service sector, it is now based on the investments as well as turnovers.

Dr. H P Kumar, Former CMD, NSIC & Advisor, PHDCCI discussed how the hospitality sector could jumpstart their business through the help of Ministry of MSME. He said, "It is a pleasure to discuss with you about the inclusion of travel and tourism and hotel & restaurants into the MSME sector. This sector was already there, the only thing is that because of the change in definition, a large number of enterprises have become part of this sector. More and more enterprises and people associated with this sector will get a lot of benefits due to the schemes Govt of India offers through the Ministry of MSME and various other ministries. In total there are more than 70 schemes which offer assistance to various programmes of the

micro, small and medium enterprises. There are many benefits that are being given to the hospitality industry such as COVID packages given most recently by the FM."

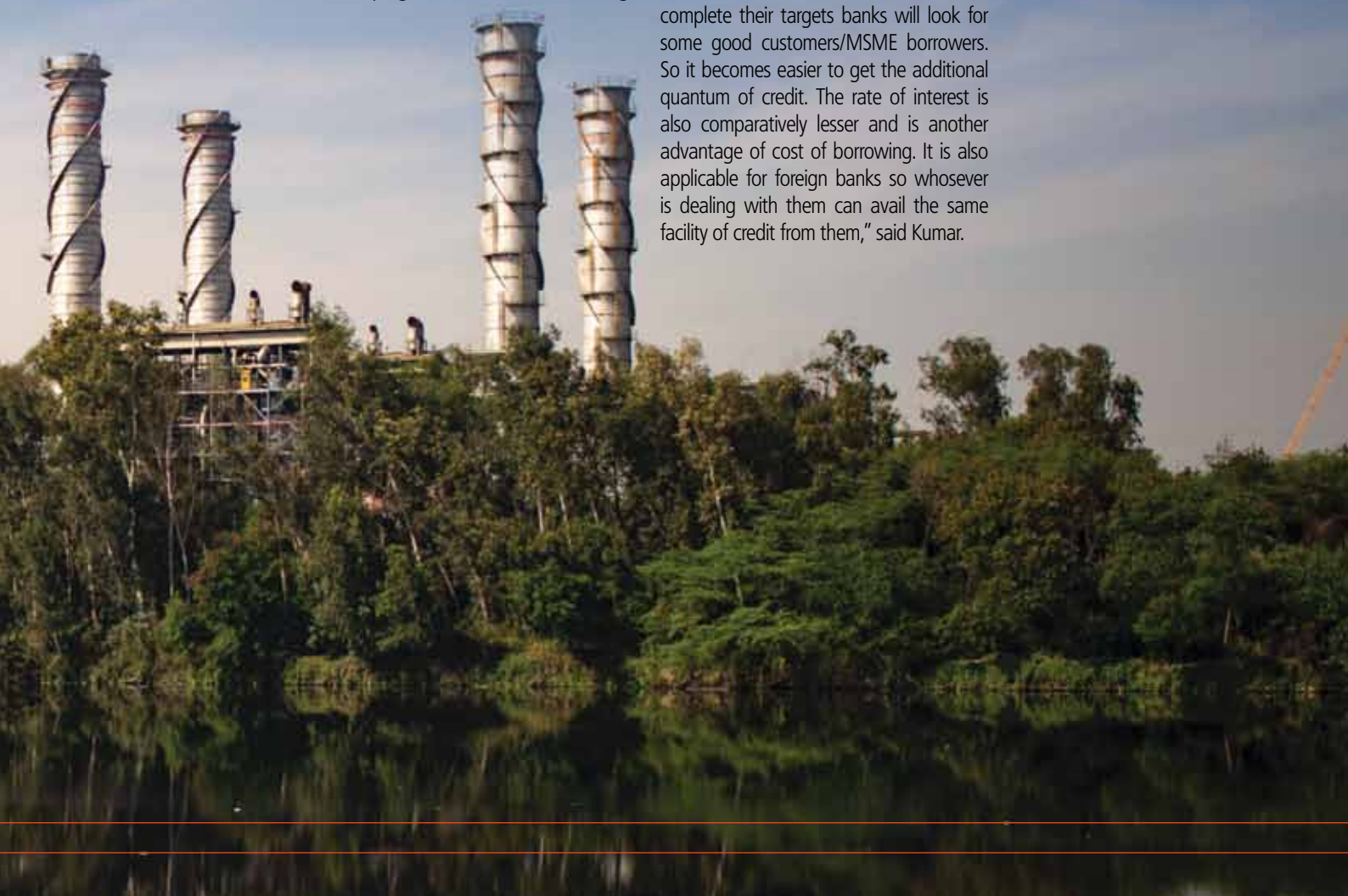
"Besides the easy way of registering your organisation under Udyam Aadhar which has been recently opened up by MSME, the ministry makes the process very simple and doable from your home. 95 per cent or even more of the enterprises of the sector will be covered under this scheme. You can jumpstart your operations by availing these facilities. The govt facilitates through RBI and through its own policies for drawing out financial and equity support so when it comes to raising finances, availability of bank finances and also the funding through equity markets becomes easier for the market. But MSMEs have been reported to raise funds through stock markets, which is a simplified procedure.

As far as bank loans are concerned, the focus of govt and RBI during the COVID-time has been on the MSME sector, especially on how to accelerate the additional financial and credit support to the MSMEs on a priority basis. Allocation of credit to the priority sector is presently 40 per cent of the entire lendable resources of the banking sector. The priority sector includes MSMEs. As hotels and restaurants industry is a part of MSMEs they can surely take advantage of the priority sector classification. The advantage of such a classification is that in order to complete their targets banks will look for some good customers/MSME borrowers. So it becomes easier to get the additional quantum of credit. The rate of interest is also comparatively lesser and is another advantage of cost of borrowing. It is also applicable for foreign banks so whosoever is dealing with them can avail the same facility of credit from them," said Kumar.



Manoj Sharma

“
There is no demarcation between MSME and service sector
”





Industry can surely take advantage of priority sector classification

Dr. H P Kumar



The Enterprise Development Centre would be mentoring the MSME fraternity

Anand Sherkhane



Kumar further added, "The preferential procurement policy of the govt announced in 2012 covers by and large all the sectors like state, central, PSUs. If the govt is buying and procuring any service, they have to have at least 25 per cent of the total purchases from the micro and small sectors across the entire country in all the departments of the Government of India. Hotels & restaurants and even travel and tourism enterprises can take advantage of this policy.

The other benefit which is available to the MSMEs is collateral free lending of upto ₹2 cr guaranteed by the govt and without any collateral security. MSMEs stand to benefit in terms of acquiring the assets which are being offered for takeover or liquidation. Another provision by the govt for the MSMEs is that if they supply goods and services to any buyer or govt, all the payments have to

come within 45 days, failing which the buyer can be penalised or interest payment has to be made beyond 45 days which is three times the bank rate. These outstanding balances which are delayed have to be reported under the Company's Act and are reflected in the annual report.

The government has introduced the MSME Samadhaan portal where people can lodge their complaints and report against any buyer who has not made the payment. Other provisions introduced by the govt include the ₹3 lakh cr worth of emergency credit line which is available to all businesses including the MSMEs and which is extended till March 31, 2021.

In addition to that there are two other schemes. Distressed fund of ₹20,000 cr is also available for MSMEs. Second is the fund of ₹50,000 cr which has been announced by the govt to direct the flow of capital to the MSMEs not only for listing on the Stock Exchanges but also for other investment purposes. This type of fund is managed by National Small Industry Corporation (NSIC) for implementation."

Anand Sherkhane, Addl. Development Commissioner (ADC), Ministry of MSME highlighted various schemes and programmes of MSMEs for the hospitality sector. He said, "There is a change in the definition of bringing travel and tourism into the fold of MSMEs, which is the need of the hour. I served in Goa where there was a need for creating a robust and comprehensive tourism policy for the state. I did try to bring about changes in the tourism policy in the state, as it was very pertinent for the government of Goa to think about the tourism policy.

FACT FILE

- Allocation of credit to the priority sector is presently 40% of the entire lendable resources of the banking sector.
- MSMEs can avail collateral free lending of upto ₹2 cr guaranteed by the govt.
- If the govt is buying and procuring any service, they have to have at least 25 per cent of the total purchases from the micro and small sectors across the entire country in all the departments of the GOI.

There is no cohesion between various associations and trade bodies across the nation and these bodies need to come under an umbrella and work out what is good for the sector and how to take things up with the state govts and the Union government.

I would urge all the associations to brainstorm as to how do we create that kind of ecosystem and always prescribe in terms of your policies to the government, suggesting a short, medium and long-term plan of action. So you need to really come out with a vision for yourself in order to include your say in the proposals in the budget which in turn will be a benefit for your members."

Sherkhane further talked about the Fund of Funds Scheme which is ₹10,000 cr which will be given by the govt and ₹40,000 cr will be mopped up from the marketplace, so this is one of the biggest venture capital funding that GOI has announced, thus fulfilling the funding requirements of the MSMEs.

or file it on the Champions Portal and we will ensure that within seven days we will provide some respite to you. The other scheme is Technology Upgradation Scheme and you can include it in your sector.

In every district we are developing an Entrepreneurship/Enterprise Development Centre which would do the handholding and mentoring of the MSME fraternity and provide the much-needed help to them for resolving all the problems that they are facing in their businesses.

Also, presently the Ministry of MSME is trying to rework on all schemes by creating a task force to understand what we have been doing for all these years and what is that the industry requires and how to make it more beneficial for all the stakeholders."

Laskshyaraj Singh Mewar, Management Committee Member, HRANI & EC Member, FHRAI, said, "The time has come to understand the Indian traveller as a



Laskshyaraj Singh Mewar

It's time to understand the Indian traveller as a global traveller



Jaison Chacko
SG
FHRAI



Himanshu Talwar
ASG
FHRAI



Mansoor Adil
Director & Sr. Executive VP,
Sarovar Hotels



Ajay Bakaya
Managing Director
Sarovar Hotels

As the fund is so huge there will be a large number of sector venture funds within that mother fund. NSIC has been the anchoring corporation who has been taking care of this scheme. SBI Caps has already been put in place as the fund manager. In the coming months we will start inviting applications for the daughter funds i.e. the venture funds in the specific sectors.

The second scheme is the 'Cluster Development Scheme' that the tourism sector can avail. This scheme is meant to create a common facilitation infrastructure. The other policy is PPE policy which you need to identify and stake your claim to and impress upon the agencies to procure the required services from you.

Another benefit that we are providing is to not go global for the tenders which are beyond ₹200 cr and so you need to create a bundle of services which you can offload back to the public sector and hold under your kitty. In case of any grievances and complaints you can register

global traveller and not just as a traveller for the domestic market. There are many states within our nation, so it's time we tap into the power of our travellers."

Mansoor Adil, Director and Senior Executive Vice President at Sarovar Hotels, said, "The schemes and programmes introduced by GOI are something that the industry was looking forward to and has come up with the support of MSME sector and hospitality sector.

The whole process of registration that you have taken us through is much simplified now. Though some of the hotels did try to get themselves registered but unfortunately they couldn't qualify as during that time the moratorium interest was there, thus it was not affecting them so badly. Overall, I think this is going to be a welcome move. Also, when it comes to the federation, with this clarity, we can reach out to other associations that cover the hotel industry specifically and encourage them to get themselves registered and avail the benefits."

Learnings from the CRISIS

Hoteliers discuss how the 'new normal' has made them realise the importance of empathy and communication.



Neha Rawat



Chandan Thakur

Chandan Thakur
General Manager
Novotel Kochi Infopark

What were your biggest learnings this year?

This year might have been hard, but there is always light at the end of the tunnel. Through every hardship and trial we are faced with, there is a purpose behind it and a lesson to be learned.

Some of my personal learnings were to not take things around me for granted, be more perseverant and continue to sharpen my spirit of conquest and stay focused on my life goals.



What have you drastically changed for the future in your brand?

In these uncertain and dynamic times, hotels in particular, need to reinforce certain foundations – a deep understanding of guests, a clear idea of creating and delivering guest experience according to the culture, cuisine and location, and an inspiring brand experience delivered consistently across all touch points to drive both brand perception and business performance.

At Accor, we have created and implemented multiple initiatives. To start with, ALLSAFE, which is our new, elevated level of cleanliness protocols and standards with intensified hygiene and prevention, ensures safety of our guests and employees.

Secondly, we have recently launched 'Vivaah by Novotel', across the network of 20 Novotel properties, an initiative aimed at enhancing the contemporary virtual wedding experience in the new now.

The wedding packages are carefully crafted and are completely holistic in nature. They cover all the aspects that are required to make a wedding a festive and resplendent affair.

Accor is one of the leading hotel groups in India to introduce this virtual wedding concept.

Any initiatives or new concept that your hotel has introduced or is planning on introducing?

At Novotel Kochi Infopark, we are in a process of setting up of a mini hydroponic farm, which is a method of growing plants without soil, by using mineral nutrient solutions in water. We have initiated our first trials with various herbs, spinach, lettuce, and bell peppers and will gradually add more vegetables. Going forward the idea is to be self-sustainable for the basic produce of the hotel kitchen.

Anything else you would like to mention.

I would like to convey to my colleagues to endure and save yourselves for happier times.



We are setting up a mini hydroponic farm for growing plants without soil





Vikas Suri

Vikas Suri
Senior Associate Vice President
Lords Hotels and Resorts

What were your biggest learnings this year?

Looking back, I believe we have not experienced a crisis of this magnitude in the past. The pandemic has changed the way our industry will operate in the short and long-term.

There have been many learnings in the past few months. Firstly, safety and hygiene is at the forefront and here to stay. Today hygiene, quality control and cleanliness include stringent disinfection and sanitisation. Our group has enforced quality and safety standards across all properties. Protocols include contactless registration, thermal scanning, face masks, elevated hygiene and social distancing. Each property has not only met but exceeded cleaning quality requirements and completed the COVID-19 checklist and hygiene audit. Personally, the biggest leaning has been that the health and the health of your loved ones should be

above everything else. This crisis has also forced hotels to re-look at their costs and adopt stringent cost control measures in all departments.

As fixed costs had to be cut down, we brainstormed at all levels to find ways to tackle the crisis. We scaled down our expenses, created new SOPs, discovered new ways to efficiently run the operations and explored new avenues for revenue. Also, our team was trained to multitask and take up additional responsibility.

What have you drastically changed for the future in your brand?

As the country went into lockdown and then opened up, the most pressing question was what lies ahead and how long will it take for business to return to normal. It was important to withstand the storm and not to get wiped away.

Our group has reshaped the way services and amenities are offered and we have aligned with the changes in guest expectations. Ancillary services like co-working spaces, food delivery, facility management etc. are here to stay.

The need of the hour is to adopt more creative approaches in conducting our business. We have implemented several innovative ideas and adopted automation and new technology for ease of operations. Contactless payments, digital menus, spaced out seating arrangements, to mention a few, minimise human contact.

We also remain connected with our guests through all digital channels and guest connect programmes as this will provide them the much-needed confidence to travel to our hotels.

Any initiatives or new concept that your brand introduced or is planning on introducing?

Lords Hotels and Resorts introduced the safe stay initiative 'Karona Safe Rahona Safe' which is based on the guidelines of WHO, MoHFW and FSSAI. Disinfection of rooms, function halls, corridors and public spaces by using electrostatic sprayers, enhanced air filtration system for ventilation, moving toward contactless and digitalisation operations are some of the changes which we have adopted. The enhanced protocols include social distancing, contactless check-in, sanitisation, in-room dining, thermal screening of guests, to mention a few.



We scaled down our expenses & explored new avenues for revenue



Sarbendra Sarkar
Founder and Managing Director
Cygnett Hotels and Resorts

What were your biggest learnings this year?

For us, the biggest learnings this year have been:

- The importance of soft skills such as empathy and communication. This skill has helped us effectively keep in touch with our customers and slowly gain their trust.
- The need for multiskilling (this could help with employees feeling empowered and thus leading to retention in the long run). This indicates that managers must adopt the evolving practices that enable employees to be multiskilled.
- The importance of crisis and team management.
- The importance of cost controls and how to convert fixed costs into variable costs.

What have you drastically changed for the future in your brand?

I would say the way we react to our guests. The 'new normal' guests are less interested in the 'quick sell' i.e., low prices, discounts and are more interested in how you will manage their expectations of health, safety and hygiene. They are looking to build a long-term relationship & a sense of comfort. Personalised, meaningful experiences are the way forward. We are all set to satisfy the new age needs of our guests.

Any initiatives or new concept that your brand introduced or is planning on introducing?

We have already implemented a programme titled 'Health & Safety Assured' across all our properties. This programme is in line with all safety and hygiene rules

set by WHO and other local/central health agencies. We have also implemented several technological interventions to ensure contactless check-in & check out, QR coded menus, etc.

Anything else you would like to mention?

Despite COVID we have managed to stay afloat and even expanded our portfolio to include new properties with an artistic décor, a cozy atmosphere, pool, gym, restaurants, spacious banquet halls and conference rooms. Some of our new properties include Cygnett Residences, Bhiwadi, Cygnett Park, Jaipur, Cygnett Inn, Dehradun and Cygnett Inn, Tezpur, Assam. ::

Also, we have launched our first hotel in Punjab, 'Cozzet Stay Amritsar'. Located in the heart of the city and about 400 metres from the renowned Golden Temple, this property is in close proximity to the airport, railway station and provides easy access to all commercial hubs, shopping malls and entertainment centres. Cozzet Stay is ideal for visitors coming into the city for business or leisure.

I guess what has worked for us in these tough times is our consistent communication with our existing/potential customers across all consumer touch points.



Sarbendra Sarkar



**Personalised, meaningful experiences
are the way forward**





‘A HOLISTIC LEARNING approach’

Dr. Sandeep Kulshreshtha, former Director & Professor at Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITM) shares insights on the changing scenario in the industry.



Dr. Sandeep
Kulshreshtha

How has the response been for online internships in the hospitality industry? Are they picking up amid the pandemic?

Today most of the students are opting for online internships. For students in India, the concept is new. However, in some of the countries, especially those in the Scandinavian region, online internships are very common.

Firstly, for students who pass out from hotel management institutes, it is essential to keep abreast of the trends in technology and marketing, especially social media marketing. Secondly, what we have witnessed in the hotel management space is that internship exposure is not confined to just one sector, for example, in the food and beverages sector, hoteliers are increasingly focusing on healthy options like immunity boosting foods

and beverages. So the focus is on a holistic learning approach and knowledge is imparted to students on all aspects through online internships.

Almost 20 to 25 per cent training is being given in the five-star hotels. The use of technology in the hospitality sector has been added as a new subject while internships also focus on app based technology.

As COVID vaccines are being rolled out, will the sentiment change for the hospitality institutes and industry?

Hospitality is something which would be required forever. The only thing is that parameters would be different. In the survival mode all hotels, restaurants, hospitality institutes, etc. are adapting to the new normal. In spite of the roll out of COVID-19 vaccines in the coming months, it might take a while for the industry to recover. Hence, we need to be prepared to take all kinds of precautions. In this part of the world, we have a better immunity system when compared to the Europeans, but even then, when we talk about domestic tourism or when



Students need to keep abreast of the trends in technology and marketing



we talk about hotels and restaurants within the country, they have to adopt stringent health, hygiene and safety protocols.

However, even in these trying times, events have been taking place. We have seen that in the hotel sector a large chunk of the events are taking place. Weddings are also happening, but the question is, how to manage those weddings with lesser number of people and with the proper protocols. So all these things would remain, I think, for the next one or two years. Let us hope that things would change at the earliest in the best interest of the hospitality industry. I wish to convey to the students that they should not lose their confidence. They need to be positive. In the current scenario, you have to be creative and innovative, you have to find out new ways to survive within the hospitality sector. As a hotelier, you need to have knowledge about tourists and clients, you need to know why they are coming to your hotel, from where they are coming, what kind of experiences are they looking at, what they will eat, etc.. You need to do thorough research so that you are well equipped to come up with new practices to satisfy them.

effort means being concerned and taking care of your entire workforce. Also, you need to be a smart host. As a smart host you have to conduct training, especially when it comes to adopting new protocols and using new technology across the board.

Finally, the focus needs to be on tourism and hospitality. We cannot segregate them as they are interrelated. So smart destinations or smart hotels are also very important, when you are developing the hotels you have to keep in mind that some of them have already made the changes.

A smart hotel or a smart restaurant is a new concept. A smart hotel or restaurant knows how to use technology so that the customer or the client can be happy. When we talk about the hospitality sector, we must take into consideration the needs of smart



We must take into consideration the needs of smart guests



As of now, what do you think the hospitality industry needs to focus on, especially when it comes to meeting the expectations of employees as well as guests?

We have to work together in the sense that it is not just all about the management but employees as well. So there has to be a synchronised effort. And, a synchronised

guests. Now, that's something unique, and it is the responsibility of the hotel or the restaurant to take care of the needs of customers or guests. Today mind management, yoga, meditation, mental wellbeing, to name a few, are becoming important for customers, and hoteliers have to be prepared to cater to these needs.

Debt restructuring

Regional Presidents stress on the need for govt to make sector-specific tweaking in the debt restructuring policy to allow hospitality establishments to benefit from loan restructuring.

Neha Rawat



Sherry Bhatia
President, HRAWI

Hospitality is a capital and labour-intensive industry with a longer gestation period as compared to businesses in other sectors.

The industry has been requesting the government to offer us a sector-specific package which will help the industry revive.

We are asking the government to offer loan extensions as those given under the Prime Minister's scheme for loans below ₹25 crores for SMEs and MSMEs.

The industry is in need of a one-time loan restructuring. Presently we are being denied



Anywhere between 40-50% restaurants and 30-40% hotels are on the verge of shutdown

this just because the industry doesn't fit in the pre-defined conditions for loan restructuring. This is again because banks fail to note the underlying difference between hospitality businesses and businesses in other sectors.

The industry has also requested for complete waiver of interest for hospitality establishments for the lockdown and the moratorium period.

The government should formulate a concrete policy to support the hospitality industry which is the most affected sector due to the pandemic.

As of now, the industry is in dire need of working capital. This too needs to be supported by the government through a soft loan with low rate of interest for the industry to stabilise and reach the pre-COVID levels.

It has become difficult for establishments to mobilise loans as financial institutions have marked the industry in the negative list for lending.

At present anywhere between 40 to 50 per cent restaurants and 30 to 40 per cent hotels are on the verge of shutdown which will also result in millions of job losses.

A favourable policy has to be drawn by the government for the survival of the hospitality industry.



Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI

A NEW RESTRUCTURING MECHANISM FOR MSMEs

The hospitality industry has been engulfed in massive losses and mounting debts since the pandemic hit the



The COVID-19 stressed MSME borrowers will be made eligible for restructuring of their debt

country. To save the industry from an almost imminent collapse, loan extensions should be given to the sector on similar lines as those given under the Prime Minister's scheme for loans below Rs 25 crores for SMEs and MSMEs.

The Reserve Bank of India recently announced a new debt restructuring mechanism

for the MSME borrowers as part of its Monetary Policy Committee decision. As per the new debt restructuring policy, the COVID-19 stressed MSME borrowers will be made eligible for restructuring of their debt under the existing framework provided their accounts with the concerned lender are classified as standard as on March 1, 2020. This restructuring has to be availed and implemented latest by March 31, 2021. A restructuring framework for MSMEs was in place for 'standard' assets as on January 1, 2020. Now, with the new policy, those defaulters, who are classified as standard as on March 1, 2020, will be able to avail the loan restructuring facility. The RBI has also announced several measures to 'instil confidence' in the market and 'facilitate flow of funds at affordable rates'.

GOVT SUPPORT NEEDED

The hospitality and tourism sector desperately seek support from the government on similar lines and hope that the government will soon make sector-specific tweaking in the policy to allow hospitality establishments to benefit from loan restructuring. If a favourable policy is not drawn for survival of the hospitality sector then at least 40 to 50 per cent restaurants and 30 to 40 per cent hotels in the country will shut down, resulting in millions of job losses.



K. Syama Raju
President, SIHRA

PLEA FOR GRANTING INDUSTRY STATUS

A delegation of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) and the South India Hotels & Restaurants Association (SIHRA) under the leadership of D V S Somaraju. Hon. Treasurer, FHRAI and Executive Committee Member, SIHRA met with Arvind Kumar, Principal Secretary, Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA&UD) Department, government of Telangana and Jayesh Ranjan (IAS), Principal Secretary of Industries & Commerce & IT Departments of Telangana govt, requesting for the hospitality sector in the state to be granted industry status. D.V.S. Somaraju has submitted a representation on the subject.

Citing the recent decision made by the Maharashtra government of granting industry status and corresponding benefits to the hospitality sector in the state, FHRAI said that Telangana too wants its hotels to be charged at industrial rates for power supply, water supply, taxes and dues instead of the commercial rates that are currently applicable.

QUASHING OF BILLS FROM MAR-SEP 2020

In Tamil Nadu, SIHRA guided members to file individual writ

petitions seeking to quash the HT EB bills for the lockdown period. Since the HT bills raised by the Department for the lockdown period from March to August 2020 are unsustainable and in violation of the statutory regulations and further the maximum demand charges and the compensation towards low PF is also not in accordance with the law, the Madras High Court has quashed the bills from March to September 2020.



Telangana wants its hotels to be charged at industrial rates for taxes and dues

RESUMPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Due to SIHRA's consistent representations, Tamil Nadu government has permitted tourist places to open from December 14 and has abolished the e-pass system and made it as e-registration to enter the state. For anyone travelling from Karnataka, Pondicherry and Andhra Pradesh, no registration is required.

Open air social gatherings and functions have been permitted in Tamil Nadu without any restrictions but within 50 per cent capacity of the space from December 19, 2020 onwards. This will help hoteliers attract more banquet business.

SIHRA has been continually following up with Tamil Nadu government for the payment pending towards the accommodation provided to frontline warriors by hoteliers.

Due to SIHRA's efforts payments were cleared up to August and we are closely following up for the rest of the period.



Surendra Kumar Jaiswal
President, HRANI

NEED TO KICK-START ECONOMIC RECOVERY

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant and far-reaching economic damage to the hospitality industry. It is no secret that hospitality is one of the worst affected industries as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Zero business during the first seven months of the lockdown, negative cash flows, threats of insolvency and millions of jobs losses have devastated the sector completely

The increased spread of the COVID-19 virus and reinstatement of state government restrictions combined with the lack of an economic stimulus package, has lowered the performance of hospitality industry during the remainder of 2020 and through next year's first half.

The hospitality industry seeks a much-needed financial life raft to buoy through the next few months until a vaccine is in mass production.

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to exacerbate the problem of bad loans affecting the credit cycle. The government should kick-start economic recovery and growth by boosting investment through

the special package resulting into employment.

EXPECTATIONS FROM GOVERNMENT

We are expecting complete interest waiver for the hospitality industry from government; a complete review of the Kamath Committee recommendations on priority basis; no credit rating of loans by agencies working under SEBI guidelines until September 2021; and working capital requirement as a soft loan with low interest.

In addition to these measures, we are seeking waiver of demand / fixed charges levied in electricity bills; refund / adjustment of excise fee deposited; one time / automatic extension of validity of various licenses and approvals without levy of any fees up to March 31, 2021; relief from property tax by reducing the current rates by 50 per cent for hotels and hospitality establishments for a suitable period during the current financial year; and no penalty or interest to be levied on payment of any dues to state government.



We expect no interest to be levied on payment of any dues to state government

Tax incentives for hotels and restaurants making capital expenditures to abide by the organisation's Safe Stay heightened health and cleaning initiative as well as liability protection for hotels against coronavirus exposure claims. and infrastructure status to hospitality sector for its revival is the need of the hour.

Innovative solutions

Anmol Ahluwalia, GM, North Goa, Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa, Goa, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa, shares insights.



Hazel Jain



Anmol Ahluwalia

How are you making guest rooms and public areas safe for everyone – guests and staff?

The lockdowns have been eased across states and our hotels are ready to welcome guests. Under the group wide initiative of 'Tajness – a commitment Restrengthened' all hotels have implemented new and enhanced safety and hygiene protocols for all guests, employees, partners and vendors. Some of these protocols include thermal screening of all employees and guests, intensive hospital level sanitisation as well as new contactless processes and social distancing measures.

At all our hotels, we have always had the most stringent protocols for guest safety in rooms and public areas and we have now added another layer of hygiene and sanitation keeping in mind the norms given by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. We also enhanced the adoption of digital technology in order to keep guests safe. Towards this we recently launched I-Zest – a zero-touch applications for customer experiences.

What are the challenges the housekeeping staff faces on an everyday basis since COVID-19?

All our associates have to wear PPE to work and at times it may be restrictive (specially a hazmat suite when cleaning quarantine rooms), but it's mandated. The time and effort for cleaning a room has increased as every touch point now has to be cleaned and disinfected so the effort and physical work for the associate has increased. The average increase in room cleaning time is 15 to 20

minutes for each room. All precautions and SOPs have to be followed to mitigate risk of any infection for guests and associates. They need constant engagement, training, appreciation and motivation to keep their morale and dedication intact.

What is the importance of innovation and thinking out of the box, especially in times like these?

Tough times make us think more innovatively. We have looked at changing many of our in-house processes using innovation or technology. These include in-house touchless sanitising machines, in-house masks, QR codes (for menu and service directories), contactless check-in and check-outs, option of 'Service by choice' for room cleaning, etc. We have also adapted to virtual training sessions and assessments, virtual town halls and conduct almost all meetings digitally.

How have guest priorities changed since COVID-19?

The guests' expectations around hygiene and sanitation have changed. Guests are very conscious about the cleaning process and like to know about the disinfection measures in rooms and public areas. While adoption of the enhanced safety measures and communicating the same during the guest journey is essential to inspire confidence in travellers, consistency and execution is even more critical. Housekeeping associates are the warriors on whose shoulders rest the responsibility of ensuring safe surroundings for all guests and associates. We ensure all associates receive training on standards and protocols on a regular basis. A new session called MY Cleanliness Commitment has been introduced for associates where each employee takes ownership of keeping their work area disinfected.



Each employee takes ownership of keeping their work area disinfected





Value for money

Le Birch Hotels & Resorts offers end-to-end solutions right from operational SoPs to sales and marketing support, design and technical assistance to revenue management expertise.



Hazel Jain

Part of Applewood Hospitality and formed three months ago, Le Birch Hotels & Resorts is a hotel management company. It was formed with a purpose to provide a platform to independent hotels and offer them end-to-end solutions right from operational SoPs to sales and marketing support on a pan-India basis, design and technical assistance to revenue management expertise. Le Birch Hotels & Resorts has recently signed up its first hotel in Mumbai in Andheri East. Speaking about the business model, **Shantanu Jha**, Founder & CEO, Le Birch Hotels & Resorts, says, "We want the independent hotels to be able to compete with the organised and branded chains. We have just signed up our first hotel, Le Birch House in Andheri East, Mumbai, close to both domestic and international airports. It is a 38-key boutique hotel designed to offer exceptional services at value for money. We have four more properties in pipeline and will announce them soon. The response has been very encouraging."

DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

Explaining the company's distribution strategy, Jha adds, "We will be working across the spectrum with corporates, travel agents, MICE specialists and OTAs. Each of these segments will be contributing towards a balanced customer base. However, our offers to each segment will be customised and we are happy to customise our offering for each of our travel agent partners as well. The hotel is available online. However, the travel agent partners can also book with us directly."

HOTEL ON-BOARDING

Once the terms are finalised, the on-boarding process starts with a re-branding or co-branding exercise, moving the existing extranets on its platform, including the hotel details on all its marketing collaterals, brand training for the hotel team, etc. Jha says, "We do not waste much time on completing the on-boarding process so that the hotel does not lose out on potential revenue. The owners may be required to spend money on upgradation only in areas where it is essential. The hotel technology is something that we don't expect the owners to compromise on. They do not have to spend on sales and marketing resources which are provided by us at no cost to the owners. The marketing creative design team is in-house and hence the owners are able to save a lot on that. Corporate training and development is provided by us at no additional cost to the owner. We do not levy any hidden charges."



Shantanu Jha

He adds that the company offers the best of both worlds to the independent hotel owners by bringing in the same expertise as established hotel chains at a substantially reduced cost of on-boarding, transparent pricing, sales and marketing support without an expensive makeover.



Corporate training is provided by us at no additional cost to the owner



The NE conundrum

While the Northeast has become a popular pick for workcations, there are a few challenges in restarting full-fledged tourism, says **Bjorn DeNiese**, a Northeast Tourism Specialist.

Domestic tourism in the Northeast has gradually picked up. States like Sikkim and Meghalaya have seen a spurt in arrivals especially from the nearby states of West Bengal and Assam. Being one of the areas in the country where social and physical distancing is normal due to more open spaces and natural surroundings, it has also become a popular pick for professionals from the metros to work from the Northeast. So for longer stays, which many of the smaller-owner driven hotels and guest houses are happier with, this has provided a unique opportunity for cultural immersion for tourists.

There are of course a few challenges to restart full-fledged tourism in the Northeast since the COVID infection numbers are relatively lower and that is how the states would want to have it with as much control over movement as possible. Online mechanisms requiring prior registration have been put in place to enable the state governments to be in the know of traveller itineraries, hotel stays, etc.

Meghalaya additionally requires tourists to produce a COVID negative test result prior to entering the state which has deterred some arrivals although the process is fairly simple at the border. Each of the eight states has different protocols and the accessibility to this information is another challenge that tourists as well as agents – from and outside the area – face.



Bjorn DeNiese

“
Each of the eight states has different protocols and the accessibility to this information is a challenge for tourists
”

Further complications in planning itineraries arise since many states have almost a parallel authority at the panchayat/village and town level. So the flow of information with regard to opening of tourist spots needs to be consulted at the village level or could result in being turned away by a simple barricade or sign just before getting to the spot. Limited phone and internet connectivity is both a bane and boon since while it helps you truly enjoy your vacation and stay in the now as it should be in the Northeast, it also disconnects you from work and other information that would be required from time to time.

WEDDINGS AND FITs ARE BACK

Inquiries for FITs and leisure travel have been picking up. Smaller, more intimate wedding inquiries have been coming in as well. There have also been domestic series groups between 10-15 rooms each and smaller family groups of 5-10 rooms that have been choosing the Northeast as a destination to explore. Due to competitive rates as well at this point, the length of stay has increased.

There is also rebranding and re-looking at state tourism policies in order to incorporate safer travel for all in the days to come as well.

(Bjorn DeNiese is a Northeast Tourism Specialist. Views expressed are his own.)





‘Raising The Bar’

Diageo India’s ‘Raising The Bar’ programme is helping provide a strong on-the-ground support to qualifying outlets by making provisions of physical equipment and hygiene kits.

Over 1,500 restaurants, pubs and bars across India have signed up to avail the business revival support provided under Diageo India’s ‘Raising The Bar’ programme in the very first phase. Registrations have come in from across the states such as Assam, Chandigarh, Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.

With the gradual easing of the lockdown restrictions and the ongoing festive season, businesses are slowly re-opening their doors to customers. Providing a safe work environment for their employees as well as a safe ambience for the customers is the topmost priority for the businesses.

‘Raising The Bar’ programme is helping provide a strong on-the-ground support to qualifying outlets by making provisions of physical equipment and ‘hygiene kits’ comprising of high-quality permanent sanitiser dispensers, medical grade hand sanitiser and a range of personal protection equipment including masks and gloves.

The programme is also helping establish partnerships with online reservations and cashless systems; mobile bars and outdoor equipment.

Commenting on the successful initiation of Phase I, **Shweta Jain**, VP – Luxury Commercial & Key Accounts, Diageo India, said, “Diageo has always been a strong partner to the hospitality and F&B industry across segments. We all appreciate the industry’s measures & steps taken

to reinstate confidence amongst consumers to socialise and come back to their favourite outlets.

As the F&B industry readies for resumption of services/operations, it is imperative that we support them as well. We are elated with the response ‘Raising the Bar’ programme has received in its first phase and the strong endorsement garnered within the fraternity”

Ajay Gowda, Owner – Byg Ventures, one of the early registrants, said, “Indian hospitality and F&B industry has witnessed unprecedented times. Diageo India has always considered this fraternity as an integral part of our communities. Raising The Bar programme will not only help outlets but consumers as well in coming back to their favourite outlets. So far this programme has given a strong backup to outlets by providing non-cash support including physical equipment like hygiene kits as well as new-age tech solves like contactless dining. The digital screens being put in outlets are surely an innovative way to deliver high quality menu deliverables in this new normal.

Diageo India is supporting the F&B industry to bring back that confidence and sharing a strong message that no matter what happens we will all together keep raising the bar!”

Diageo India’s commitment is part of the USD 100 million commitment by Diageo, benefitting global cities. In India, the programme is owned and led by Black Dog, Diageo’s locally blended iconic scotch whisky.



Shweta Jain

“We are elated with the response in the first phase”



Ajay Gowda

“This programme has given a strong backup to outlets”

Ochre unveils Christmas decor

◆ Kolkata-based Ochre at Home (OAH) has unveiled Christmas décor inspiration in the form of an elegant Christmas dining table setting and a handcrafted pinewood Christmas tree. Made with recycled wood, the Christmas tree is inspired by the art of making handcrafted 'Czech wooden toys.' This sustainable tree features a natural finish and is decorated with spectacular Christmas tree decorations. The distinctive tree is the perfect fusion of originality and beauty. With a minimal and compact form, it can decorate a diverse range of spaces. This Christmas tree setting showcases understated luxury and is warm and inviting.



Remodel your uniforms with Dezenzia

◆ Over the years the concept of uniform has evolved from basic dull and bland attire to trendy chic work wear. Designer uniforms are huge vehicles of branding for the company as well as a matter of pride for the employee. Dezenzia is a fashion brand conceptualised by Zubin Mehta of Uniforms Unlimited. The company provides chic corporate apparel to various sectors like hotels, airlines, schools, hospitals, corporates etc. The brand Dezenzia designs garments for the corporate world. Mehta believes that a stylish yet practical uniform enhances value and unifies the complete experience of hospitality. He has a holistic approach towards designing, which blends richness in cultures and offers finely styled uniforms, which are practical as well as elaborate enough to bring instant connectivity with the destination where the hotels/ resorts are located.



Woollen rugs from Pequra

◆ Pequra, a brand known for its exotic collection of carpets, rugs and home decor accessories have launched the Woollen Rugs Collection. Pequra's collection comprises of beige, pink, red, blue, black, and grey rugs, made of 100% wool, which ensures hard-wearing and long-term durability. These recyclable and soft rugs come in unique designs and durable threads creating a stunning pattern in all. For a better look, you can add a few golden antiques to the room like a golden brass or a side table.



alsorg launches glass wardrobes

◆ alsorg has unveiled two new designs of elegant glass wardrobes featuring luxurious materials and a range of surface finishes. Aperto design is characterised by warm and subdued colours, the latest walk-in wardrobe designed by alsorg aims to open up your bedrooms and merge them with your dressing area. The only divider between the two spaces is an island wardrobe; which is entirely made using European metal profiles. The Forrado design comes with added vertical profiles, while still retaining the minimal and sophisticated look of basic glass wardrobes. This wardrobe is heavily equipped with imported accessories & fittings.

Yomei office desk

◆ An innovative and sophisticated office desk – S 100 – by Yomei has been launched in India by Plüsch. The S 100 Curved Desk Soft table top with or without height adjustment comes with the S 100 Storage unit that can be used as a room divider, or the S 100 Container. The storage unit has a structure in Pantex taupe and front design in micro-leather beige, and its elements can be individually planned. The lifting mechanism for height adjustment is integrated in the storage unit. With its versatile features, this office desk allows you to create a smart workstation anywhere.



Statement furniture

◆ Beyond Designs has unveiled a collection of statement-making furniture pieces each of which comes with a unique character of its own. Elaborately designed brass handles add an exclusive detail to the Tropical Buffet Cabinet with walnut finish and beveled glass top. In Luka Buffet Cabinet a pleated wood structure is decorated with etched brass handles adding textural interest to the clean-line cabinet with brass shoes.



Inhabit launches Charpai collection

◆ Inhabit has launched a bespoke series of furniture pieces that pay a luxurious and contemporary tribute to the humble charpai. Designer Neeta Kumar's Charpai collection brings a definite style, lots of drama and luxury to your space with its otherworldly charm. A fine blend of tradition and modernity, the furniture pieces are also inspired by architectural monuments and motifs. The artisanal cane is used to fashion minarets and arches that form grand backdrops for the richly crafted seating. The designer's emphasis on sustainability, ergonomics and an individualistic style find an echo in this collection.

Create reserves for crises

Jayant Singh, Managing Partner of Treehouse Hotels talks about the learnings from the pandemic and how they are taking steps to make their business sustainable.



Jayant Singh

How has the COVID-19 pandemic been for your brand?

Like every other company we have taken a hit on our reserves. We are fortunate that we had reserves and thus have been able to survive these tough times.

What steps have you taken to make your hotel business sustainable?

We are trying to put aside mandatory reserves for unforeseen events and also have a business continuity plan in case we are faced with any such eventuality in the future.

Anything else you would like to mention?

This pandemic has taught us three things.

- **Don't do wasteful expenditure** – Every expense has to be evaluated and should be commensurate with the returns.
- **Remove redundancy in staff** – Hotels need to learn to work more intelligently and with less staff.
- **Create reserves for unforeseen events** – Most of the hotels keep reserves for repairs and renovation. Now onwards, hotels will need to keep reserves for unforeseen situations like the pandemic.

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Appointments



AISHA FAIZ

Chief Operating Officer
Sun Siyam

★ Sun Siyam has appointed Aisha Faiz as Chief Operating Officer for its group of companies. Faiz has over two decades of experience in Finance and Business. She was a key member in creating the beginning of Sun Siyam as a travel agency in 1990, working side by side with the MD to establish itself as a reputed travel company. After venturing far for academics, culture and global exposure, she is now proud to be back to her roots to Sun Siyam. Faiz will play a key role in supporting the business growth and development strategies.



THOMAS ABRAHAM

General Manager
Hyatt Regency Pune & Residences

★ Hyatt Regency Pune & Residences has appointed Thomas Abraham as General Manager, in addition to his role of AVP for Hyatt Hotels, Central India. Abraham brings 27 years of experience in the hospitality industry and has spent over 13 of those years with Hyatt. He moves to Hyatt Regency Pune from the iconic Park Hyatt Hyderabad, in the same capacity, to guide the hotel to similar stature. Abraham will focus on strengthening the operational strategies of the hotel, while overseeing all nine Hyatt properties in Central India.



DEEP PREET BINDRA

General Manager
Courtyard by Marriott, Ahmedabad

★ Marriott International has appointed Deep Preet Bindra, as the General Manager for Courtyard by Marriott, Ahmedabad (Ramdevnagar). With his rich experience spanning over 17 years in the hospitality and services sector, Bindra will lead the team at the hotel to strengthen its position in the value-driven market of Ahmedabad. Bindra has worked for various hospitality brands including some of Marriott's premium properties such as JW Marriott at Aerocity in New Delhi and Marriott Whitefield in Bengaluru.



KIRAN CHALLOJU

Portfolio Director of Sales & Marketing
Holiday Inn Express

★ Kiran Challoyu has been appointed as the Portfolio Director of Sales & Marketing for a portfolio of 10 Holiday Inn Express hotels under the SAMHI ownership effective Nov 23, 2020. Challoyu comes with around 17 years of experience in spearheading Sales and Marketing operations with expertise in luxury, mid-scale and value segments of the hotel industry. His last assignment was with Ginger Hotels within the IHCL, where he was the Corporate Director of Sales for Key Markets and Travel Trade.



AMIT SANGWAN

Director of Operations
Fairmont Jaipur

★ Fairmont Jaipur has announced the promotion of Amit Sangwan from Director of Food & Beverage to Director of Operations, with all four verticals of F&B, Culinary, Front Office and Housekeeping reporting directly to him. He will also be responsible to maintain and enhance guest satisfaction. Prior to joining Fairmont Jaipur in August 2019 as Director of F&B, Sangwan was associated with renowned hotels like Pullman, Novotel and Leela amongst others. He has won various accolades from the hospitality industry.



DEV THAKUR

Director of Food & Beverages
Sayaji Hotel Indore

★ Sayaji Hotel Indore has appointed Dev Thakur as the Director of Food & Beverages. A passionate hospitality professional with over 15 years of experience in the world's finest hospitality brands, he brings to the table his expertise in fast-paced environments and high-volume operations. He is well-versed with the F&B operations of luxury hotels, destination resorts, upscale & midscale hotels. Prior to this, he was associated with Marriott International, The Leela Palaces Hotels & Resorts, Hyatt International, Hilton Hotels and Accor Hotels.



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