

# HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA

# fhrai magazine

Vol 21, Issue 7, July 2021

Pages 44 ₹50

A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE  
By DDP Publications



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options**

**LUXURY  
homestays**

**ANTICIPATING THE THIRD WAVE**



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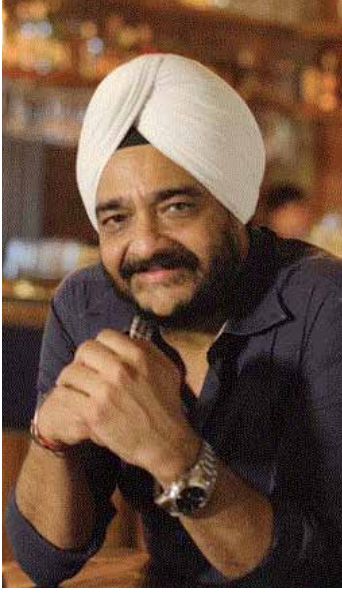
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**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President  
FHRAI

  
**The newly appointed Tourism Minister Shri G K Reddy believes that together we can chart the roadmap for tourism**  


*Dear fellow members,*

**T**rust this finds you and your families healthy and safe. Safety and hygiene have become the key words in this outbreak. As lockdowns are being lifted, gradually and carefully, returning guests are gauging a property, whether for lodging or boarding on the basis of these two concepts, i.e. how safe it is and how hygienic a premise is. Countries are opening their borders to those visitors who are fully vaccinated and have started working on the arrival plans of visitors. These are neighboring countries with an eye for the traveller from India and also the ones who travel to India.

Recently FHRAI met with the newly appointed Tourism Minister, Hon'ble Shri G Kishan Reddy at his office in Delhi and presented him a document which outlined the steps needed to be taken immediately to save this sector from extinction. Similar representations were also sent to other state governments. The FHRAI team was met with, very warmly by the honourable minister who also believed that together we can chart the roadmap ahead, for and in the interest of tourism. FHRAI also handed him the various representations made to other Ministries for immediate fiscal measures to save the hospitality industry from its present deteriorating state and for simplification of GST, increasing the threshold limit for GST for hotel rooms, waiver of various statutory charges, etc. I am positive that with such a dynamic Minister present at the helm, the voice of our industry will not go unnoticed.

Our continuous liaison through our regional arms continues to press for cancelling of property tax and minimum water charges, electricity bills along with full relief in excise fees in states, for the period we are made inoperative through specific state orders. While businesses continue to fail due to lack of support from the governments, the industry is making plans of a comeback.

Already the lockdown has taught us how to operate with minimum staff and automation was literally stuffed down our throats. Automation in businesses when we open will be a thing to watch and adopt. Digital transformation will be at its peak. Contactless is already a common word. It is ironical that an industry which is based on human dealings and is so labour-intensive, has to adopt and adapt to a contactless schedule which will have a direct repercussion on the employment of human resources.

Domestic business travel has shown signs of a mild recovery as predicted. It is expected that domestic business travel will pick up pace in the second quarter, as employees return to their workplaces and companies soften their travel advisories. Weddings and F&B demand are expected to drive the sector's further recovery. Hotel assets are being put to alternative usages such as co-living, senior living and student housing, subject to the demand in specific markets, which is a pliable possibility for others to follow. On the whole it would be prudent to expect that the recovery of the hospitality sector would not be far. Till then I wish all of us, all the best, to remain positive as the worst is surely behind us and to look forward to a new and bright way ahead.

Be safe.

**Note:** The July 2021 edition of the FHRAI magazine will be available as a printed version on request. And, 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

# JULY 2021

## REVIVING TOURISM

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G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, IAS, C&MD, ITDC spoke about the immense potential for Medical Value Tourism at a recent webinar organised by Trade Promotion Council of India.

COVER IMAGE:  
UNSPLASH



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'FOOTFALLS WILL PICK UP'	18
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We fared reasonably well during the second wave – with long staying guests, home delivery & celebratory stays, says Anupam Dasgupta, GM, The Leela Palace New Delhi.

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FHRAI EC members talk about how their top priority continues to be the health and safety of guests and team members as once people start feeling safe the entire industry will regain its glory.



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John Spence, Founder and Owner of Karma Group of Hotels and Visiting Professor at Yale University, shares his views on how the industry should cope in these trying times.

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Amidst the scare of an imminent third wave hoteliers talk about how they are going all out to lure guests with upscale experiences, enticing offers & state-of-the-art technology.



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## LUXURY HOMESTAYS 34

Founded by Sehar Shamim along with Sanjay Wadhawan & US Jamwal, Eartha Escapes which has opened its first homestay in Mashobra, comes as a breath of fresh air.



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### FHRAI

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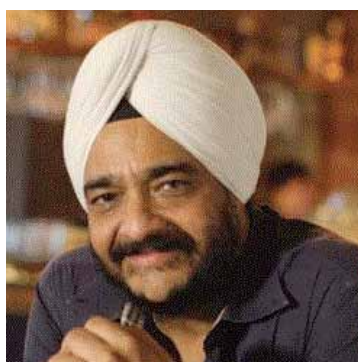
# ‘Incentivise domestic tourism’

FHRAI has welcomed the new relief measures announced by the Hon’ble Finance Minister recently. It has also stressed on the need to focus on reviving domestic tourism.

**F**HRAI has requested the government to undertake relevant measures to make the newly announced schemes more effective in implementation by setting up a redressal mechanism to ease bottlenecks in the system. It stated that presently the industry is not in a position to service the loans since there is no cash flow and additionally it is burdened with statutory liabilities and operating expenses. The short-term credit schemes are not sufficient to mitigate the larger issues faced by the sector. The FHRAI has also stressed on the need to focus on reviving domestic tourism in the country.

“The FHRAI thanks the government for sanctioning ₹60,000 Cr under the 1.1 lakh Cr Guarantee Scheme for COVID-19 affected sectors as well as for provisioning an additional ₹1.5 lakh Cr under the ECLGS. We request the government to undertake measures to make the already announced schemes more effective such as setting up a redressal mechanism to resolve complaints against banks, making a separate resolution framework for hospitality, providing similar tenor and moratorium facilities for ECLGS 1.0 & 2.0 as of ECLGS 3.0.

We also request the government to extend the tenor of the Loan Guarantee Scheme for at least 10 years and offer direct grants to the hospitality sector,” says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI. “The government’s decision to issue 5 lakh tourist visas free of cost is a great way to



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI

“**Extend the tenor of Loan Guarantee Scheme for at least 10 years**”

attract international tourists to India and is a welcome move. However, under the prevailing circumstances, it may take some time before impositions are eased and for FTAs to resume. Meanwhile, the government should focus on reviving domestic tourism and undertake special measures for its promotion as an immediate step. We request that the threshold limit for charging GST at 18 per cent on hotel room tariffs be raised from the present ₹7,500 to ₹9,500 for bringing parity of rates between the Rupee and the Dollar. Also, the threshold limit for zero GST for hotel rooms should be raised from the present ₹1,000 to ₹2,000 per room per day. The move will boost the lower



**Pradeep Shetty**  
Jt. Hon. Secretary, FHRAI

“**Issuing 5 lakh tourist visas free of cost is a welcome move**”

budget segment, thus encouraging domestic travel and promoting the tourism sector in a big way. Also allowing valid GST hotel bills of any state other than the home state of the individual assessee paid for by digital mode exempt under Section 80C for an additional amount of ₹50,000 will encourage citizens to travel within India which will further give a much-needed impetus to hotels as well as ancillary industries. With restricted foreign travel, the promotion of domestic tourism is the need of the hour. Therefore, we request the government to incentivise domestic tourism as well,” concludes **Pradeep Shetty**, Jt. Hon. Sec., FHRAI.

# Beginning of a new era

MOT, after a reshuffle of the cabinet advised by PM Narendra Modi, has got three ministers taking charge, helmed by **G Kishan Reddy**, Cabinet Minister, Tourism & Culture.



Nisha Verma

**G Kishan Reddy** has become the new Cabinet Minister of Tourism & Culture. He takes over from Prahlad Singh Patel who was at the helm of the portfolio since May 30, 2019. Reddy, an MP representing Secunderabad (Lok Sabha constituency) since 2019, has also been appointed as the Minister of Development of North-East Region. Reddy said he will work towards achieving the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with full commitment.

Taking charge alongside him is **Shripad Yesso Naik**, who has returned as the Minister of State, Tourism. Naik had a stint as MoS Tourism earlier in 2014 for a brief period. Prior to the new appointment, he was



**G K Reddy**  
Min of Tourism & Culture



**I will work towards achieving the vision of PM Narendra Modi**

the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) and Minister of State for Defence. Naik said, "If the party thinks my services are required in Delhi, I will accept it. And if it thinks my services are needed in Goa, I will accept that too. But I will never stake claim." Apart from Shripad Yesso Naik, **Ajay Bhatt** also has been given the portfolio of Minister of



**Shripad Yesso Naik**  
Minister of State, Tourism



**If the party thinks my services are required in Delhi, I will accept it**

State, Tourism. Both the new ministers will work under the Minister of Tourism, G Kishan Reddy. Bhatt is considered one of the senior-most leaders of the BJP in Uttarakhand and has served as MLA from Ranikhet legislative assembly in the past. He held portfolios like Parliamentary Affairs, Health, Disaster Excise as Cabinet Minister in Uttarakhand Government. Bhatt spoke about his role in taking the sector forward with goals and priorities that



**Ajay Bhatt**  
Minister of State, Tourism



**We hope to soon come back to the old levels of tourism in India**

have already been set by the Prime Minister. For him, priorities are already fixed. He said that he will work towards bringing the tourism sector on top. "The PM has set the target for all of us to attain peak in our respective sectors, and he himself monitors the progress. We will be working towards attaining that target," he claimed. "Now that the situation is improving day by day, we hope to soon come back to the old levels of tourism in India," he concluded.

# 'Increase FAR from 20% to 40%'

FHRAI has submitted a representation to the Govt of NCT of Delhi and DDA to consider increasing the allowable commercial retail space in hotels from 20% to 40%.

**T**he FHRAI has submitted a representation to the Hon'ble Lt. Governor of the Government of NCT, Delhi – Anil Bajjal and to the Vice Chairman of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) – Anurag Jain requesting an increase in the allowable commercial retail space in hotels from 20 per cent to 40 per cent in the Master Plan Delhi (MPD)-2041. The association has pointed out that in the earlier MPD-2041 draft, the DDA had provisioned for the increase and also had proposed including the same but has now left it out. This has brought much disappointment to the hospitality industry in the Capital city. Through its representation, the FHRAI has attempted to throw light on the several reasons justifying the need for increased FAR. It has appealed to government to consider the same for a progressive and vibrant development of Delhi.



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI



**Delhi needs to be better than international destination cities**



**Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**  
President, HRANI



**Added FAR will mitigate the strain on fiscal resources**



New York, Chicago and Paris, to name a few. Delhi needs to be bolder and better than them. We request the Govt. of NCT of Delhi and DDA to increase allowable commercial retail space in hotels from 20 per cent to 40 per cent in the MPD-2041," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

"Meeting world standards come at a huge standing cost. Major metropolises outside India have realised and incorporated the need of the modern business travellers. All amenities are within easy reach and today's hotels offer them a variety of services, the lead amidst them being quality shopping. Added FAR for commercial retail activity will mitigate the strain on fiscal resources. It will allow generation of resources for much-needed refurbishment or added room capacity to meet the needs of international travellers and put Delhi firmly as an international destination in itself. As a result, the state will also benefit significantly through increased inflows of tax revenues and duties through various instruments," adds **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, HRANI. The aspiration of everyone within the country is to gravitate to the capital, the association has stated.

"World over, the most liveable cities are those where the planning incorporates modernity, ease of doing business, easy reach of quality amenities and an infrastructure that is not decaying because of strained fiscal resources both in the private or public sectors. Hospitality industry is one of the largest employment providers and contributes approximately 10 per cent to the nation's GDP. Through the year

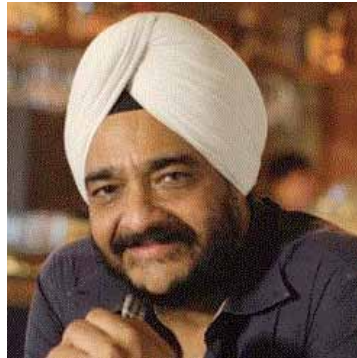
2020 and now in 2021 leading up to 2022, the hotel industry has been brought to its knees by the pandemic. Any progressive idea from our own city will bring in the much-needed resources to repay the huge outstanding dues of the hospitality establishments. Freeing up additional FAR were incorporated in the planning of international destination cities including Dubai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo,



# FHRAI pleads for govt intervention

FHRAI has submitted a representation to the govt highlighting issues faced by its member establishments over higher electricity tariffs in the UT of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

The FHRAI has submitted a representation to the former Hon'ble Tourism Minister Prahlad Singh Patel and to the Hon'ble Minister for MSMEs Nitin Gadkari highlighting issues faced by its member establishments over higher electricity tariffs in the UT of Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The association has stated that inspite of a favourable order from the Electricity Regulatory Commission, the UT's electricity department has not been extending the benefit of lower electricity tariff to the MSMEs, especially when it comes to the hospitality establishments. The FHRAI has requested the government's urgent intervention to direct the Andaman & Nicobar Administration to implement the order. It has requested that the electricity bills raised in contravention to the order dated December 2, 2020 be rectified and revised for



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI

“  
**Condition of the industry is serious in Andaman & Nicobar Islands**”

enabling units to pay the dues at the earliest. "In its tariff order dated May 31, 2021, the JERC has underscored in its order dated December 2, 2020 confirming that all establishments registered as MSMEs having Udyam registration shall be charged electricity at industrial rates. Despite this, electricity bills of such units are still being raised by the electricity department at commercial rates which is a direct contravention of the JERC order. We request the Hon'ble Minister of Tourism and the Hon'ble Minister of MSME to intervene and support the industry during its most trying times. The condition of the industry is all the more serious in regions like the Andaman & Nicobar Islands where tourism is the mainstay of the entire economy. Such apathetic attitude of the authorities makes the situation more complex , says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

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# COVID-centric FoSTaC training

The HRAWI in association with FSSAI recently conducted a COVID-19 focused Online Food Safety Supervisory Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) programme.

HRAWI

The FoSTaC programme was created especially for personnel employed in hotels and restaurants so that they are fully equipped with the required information to ensure guest safety and hygiene during the pandemic. The course covered all the basic principle rules of personal hygiene



**Sherry Bhatia**  
President, HRAWI

**In-depth knowledge was imparted on safety**

and also introduced some special provisions to cover any emergencies. The programme stressed on the need for designated Special Officers in case of a COVID-19 emergency. Among other safety protocols to be followed, the trainees were imparted in-depth information on guest handling, kitchen best practices including manpower planning and chefs' responsibilities. 40 hospitality personnel were trained under the programme which was conducted in collaboration with Parikshan. "The programme was organised to enable people working in hotels and restaurants to not only ensure guest safety but also their own. The trainer Dr. Pashupathy imparted in-depth knowledge on the finer nuances of food handling and safety to the participants," said **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI.



## Plea for extending timeline

FHRAI has requested Arun Singhal, CEO, FSSAI to extend the timeline to implement the mentioning of FSSAI License number on bills for FBOs in the wake of COVID's impact.

FHRAI has urged the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) to extend the timeline to implement the mentioning of FSSAI License number on bills for FBOs on the backdrop of the pandemic's impact to hospitality businesses. The association says that it is in favour of the FSSAI's latest order, which will help set up a robust customer grievance system in the country. "FHRAI appreciates the FSSAI's endeavour to set up a robust customer grievance system in the country. This will also improve the overall awareness of FSSAI and its underlying objectives of creating a safe and



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI

**Implementation of the order would entail a lot of expenses on businesses**

hygienic ecosystem for FBOs. While this is a great initiative, it has to be taken into account that at present, tourism and hospitality is the most impacted sector by the COVID-19 pandemic. In all probabilities, it will be the last one to recover as well.

During such times of deep crisis, the implementation of this order would entail a lot of additional expenses on businesses. Printing new receipts, invoices, bills, cash memos as well as updating software and PMS, among other ancillary activities will only burden the cash-strapped industry even more. Hence, we request the FSSAI to extend the timeline for implementation of the order until such time that some normalcy returns to the sector," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

# Waiver on excise licence fee

HRANI has welcomed Delhi government's decision on allowing waiver of licence fee for pubs, restaurants, and hotels serving liquor as they were closed due to the lockdown.

**T**he excise department of Delhi government has allowed waiver of licence fee for pubs, restaurants, and hotels serving liquor for about two months as they were closed due to the coronavirus induced lockdown from April 16 to June 20, 2021. The department has also extended the date of June 30 for payment of excise fees for the second quarter till July 31, 2021. The order has been issued by Sh. Anand Kumar Tiwari, Dy. Commissioner (Excise). The HRANI had made representations to the Excise department and Deputy Chief Minister Sh. Manish Sisodia in this regard.

A hotel or bar or restaurant is liable to pay the license fee in advance before the start of the financial year according to the nature of permit



**Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**  
President, HRANI

**“We will continue to plead with the remaining states for the waiver”**

depending on the seating capacity and the fees varies according to type of license. “The HRANI has made similar representations in all the ten states & UTs that have levied the excise licence fee, the association's President **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal** said. He added that if the business is non-operational, the fee should not be levied. “Moreover, businesses were shut because the government had asked them to. We are glad that Delhi has agreed but we will continue to plead with the remaining states for the waiver.” **Garish Oberoi**, Chairman, Delhi State Committee and Treasurer, HRANI, said, “Many restaurants in the city have not resumed the dine-in facility till now, fearing low footfall and increased losses. Some restaurants and bars have already closed permanently due to the crisis.”

HRANI

# Prioritise vaccination

HRANI has made representations requesting the governments of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana to inoculate frontline workers on priority basis.

**H**RANI in its letter dated July 2, 2021 made a representation requesting Rajendra Kumar Tiwari, Hon'ble Chief Secretary, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow to pass orders to the health department to inoculate frontline workers in tourism and hospitality sector on priority basis. **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, HRANI, stated, “The vaccination of frontline workers in hospitality and tourism will really help in creating confidence both amongst service providers as well as tourists visiting the state of Uttar Pradesh. We therefore request you to direct the health department of Uttar Pradesh to start the inoculation of staff working in hotels and restaurants on priority



**“Vaccinating frontline workers will build confidence amongst tourists”**

basis.” Also, in another letter HRANI made a representation requesting Vijai Vardhan, Hon'ble Chief Secretary, Govt of Haryana, to pass orders to the health department to inoculate frontline workers in tourism and hospitality sector on priority basis.

HRANI

# Occupancy declined by 40% m-o-m

HVS ANAROCK's recent stats reveal the India average across the hotel sector, occupancy & RevPAR change in key Indian markets, and openings and signings across branded hotels.

## HOTEL SECTOR

Key Stats (India Average)

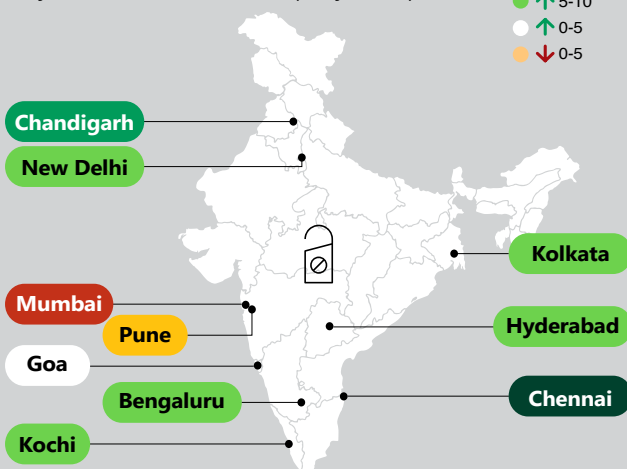
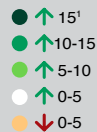


	MAY 2021	M-o-M (%)	Y-o-Y (%)	MAY 2021	APR 2021	MAR 2021	FEB 2021
ADR	₹3,100 - ₹4,300	↓ 16-18%	ADR	↓ 2-4%	↓ 4-6%	↓ 22-24%	↓ 30-32%
Occupancy	18% - 20%	↓ 11-13pp <sup>1</sup>	Occupancy	↑ 3-5 pp	↑ 18-20pp	↑ 17-19pp	↑ 16-18pp%
RevPAR	₹550 - ₹660	↓ 49-51%	RevPAR	↓ 22-24%	↓ 149-151%	↓ 21-23%	↓ 47-49%

Source: HVS Research

## OCCUPANCY CHANGE<sup>1</sup>

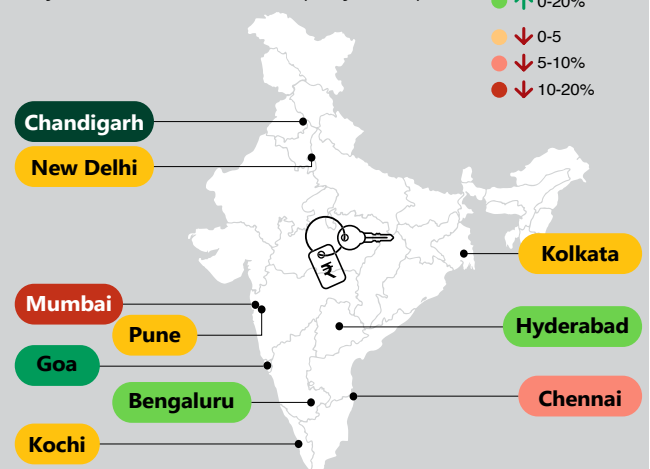
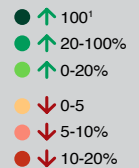
Key Indian Markets Y-o-Y (May 2021)



<sup>1</sup>Occupancy change in percentage points (pp)

## ADR CHANGE<sup>2</sup>

Key Indian Markets Y-o-Y (May 2021)

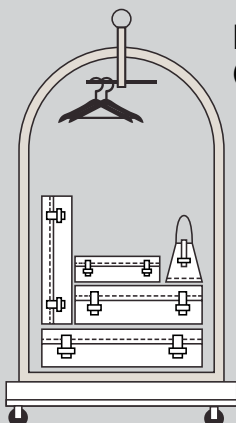


<sup>2</sup>ADR change in percentage

Source: HVS Research

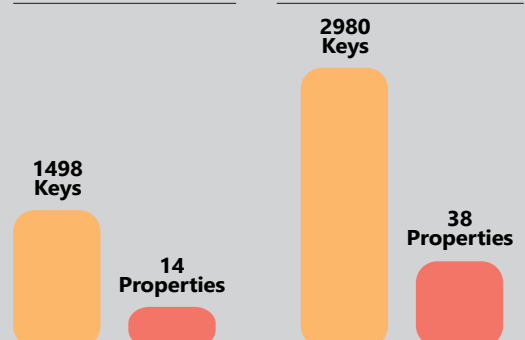
## BRANDED HOTELS<sup>3</sup>

(Jan-May 2021)



Openings

Signings



<sup>3</sup>Data collated by HVS from 19 hotel operators and media reports as of 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Source: HVS Research

# Arrival of the 'chef-preneur'

I've always believed that food is a giver, says **Ranveer Brar**, celebrity chef, author, restaurateur & benefactor.



**T**here's always a positive consequence to any disruption. At least, that's what I believe in. One of the biggest lessons the past 18 odd months have taught us is self-dependence, especially when it comes to feeding ourselves. And once you learn a craft, it stays with you for life. Even if it's for self-sustenance alone.

Last year saw perhaps, the largest consumption of virtual food resources. And when there's demand, supply naturally follows. For me, the definite arrival of the 'chef-preneur' is a true positive from this lockdown. Hotel and restaurant chefs delved into home delivery models, Cloud kitchens, food content and home chef mentoring. And that's the beauty of food. When you realise your craft can give you more than a job, new gates open.

While it seems like that from the outside, it wasn't just the Youtubers and recipe bloggers who sprung into action, but chef-preneurs too. It was a lockdown when the majority of the country either cemented or started their relationship with food. While a lot of us discovered our inherent talent for cooking, the more experienced ones set about perfecting innovating and monetising their skills.

I've always believed that food is a giver. Once you establish a relationship with food at any level, it stays with you for life. Coming to the commercial side of the food ecosystem, these times have brought the focus back singularly on PnLs. We are seeing much-needed rationalisation of real-estate costs, innovative ways of pruning prime costs and the most creative ways of pushing your topline. This is another change which will have a long-lasting impact on the industry, making it more efficient and profitable in the long run.

Although I believe that third-party delivery is a model that always needed a tilt towards the restaurant, that would never have been a matter of immediate concern if it weren't these times. I strongly believe that the food delivery ecosystem will find a sustainable equilibrium because of it taking centre stage due to COVID.

Another silver lining to these tough times is consumer focus. Restaurants have stood up to the challenge of low or no occupancies by going back to the core fundamental of the business, to provide great food and new experiences. The premise not being accessible to the consumers made the restaurateur take his food and experience to people's homes, by reaching out to more people via newer channels, offering them not just food, but culinary experiences in the comfort of the latter's homes. For instance, Chef on wheels concepts were experimented with, Sunday brunches came home.

While it has been immensely (immensely is an understatement) tough for us and our people, I still think that 'chef-preneurs', cost rationalisation and the skill of taking the restaurant out of the premise, are the victories from this battle that will impact us for times to come.

(This article has been written by Ranveer Brar, an Indian celebrity chef, Television & digital celebrity, Masterchef India judge, author, restaurateur, food film producer and benefactor.)



**Ranveer Brar**



**When you realise your craft can give you more than a job, new gates open**

# Reviving tourism

**G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, IAS, Chairman & Managing Director, ITDC** spoke about the immense potential for Medical Value Tourism in the country.



**G. K. Vardhana Rao**

In a bid to revive tourism and strengthen bilateral relationship between India and Saudi Arabia, Trade Promotion Council of India organised a webinar on Tourism Collaboration between India and Saudi Arabia with the support of embassies of both countries.

Eminent panellists included HE Dr Ausaf Sayeed, Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia; G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, IAS, C&MD, ITDC; Augustus Simon, Director Indian Subcontinent, Saudi Tourism Authority; Ashok Sethi, Director, Trade Promotion Council of India; and various industry stakeholders and partners.

Speaking on strengthening Tourism Collaboration between India and Saudi Arabia, **G. Kamala Vardhana Rao**, IAS, C&MD, ITDC, on behalf of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said, "India holds 10<sup>th</sup> position globally as far as Medical Value Tourism (MVT) is concerned, due to affordability, accessibility, and availability of medical facilities. It is the 7<sup>th</sup> dominating country in the world and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Asia Pacific region in terms of wellness tourism. India

has received 4.95 lakh medical tourists in 2017 which has gone up to over 7 lakh in 2019. With 800 NABH (National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers) and 36 JCI (Joint Commission International) accredited hospitals, India is a viable destination for medical facilities due to a robust ecosystem which is already well developed.

MVT is one of the 10 champion sectors identified by the Government of India, and we are perhaps the only country in the world with a dedicated Ministry of alternate healing and traditional medicine, the Ministry of AYUSH, which promotes Ayurveda, Unani and Homeopathy medicine. Ayurveda is taking off in a very big way worldwide, with its proven efficacy in the post-COVID recovery phase."

In addition to MVT, it was highlighted that India can offer Saudi Arabian tourists a vast seacoast with pristine beaches and a huge forest cover with 566 wildlife sanctuaries and 104 National Parks which are a great alternative to wildlife tourism offered by Africa, for example. India is also promoting MICE sector in a big way, and while people from Saudi Arabia might find it cheaper to visit Dubai for events, India is definitely a more economical destination.

Referring to the country's diverse natural heritage, Rao mentioned about India's coastal tourism with 7,500 km of coastline as well as the exquisite experience of monsoon tourism in Karnataka and Kerala. He also talked about the renewed thrust on reviving tourism in the wide snow-capped landscape of Kashmir and in scenic Leh and Ladakh as well as on the special focus of developing tourism in nature-rich North East.

Also, as a boost to international tourism in India, Rao highlighted that the Indian Government has announced issuing of free tourist visas for first 5 lakh tourists once visa issuance is restarted.

With HE Dr Ausaf Sayeed, Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia emphasizing on lifting of tourism restrictions for tourists and on tailor made tourist packages centring around medical tourism, religious tourism, heritage tourism, nature tourism, and ecotourism, both India and Saudi Arabia are looking forward to a strong synergy for the revival of tourism.



**Medical Value Tourism is one of the 10 champion sectors identified by GOI**

# Honing skills of entry-level staff

FHRAI-IHM in association with FHRAI organised a series of training programmes for Food Production and Room Division and F&B Service staff of hotels and restaurants.

The FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management (FHRAI-IHM) in association with the regional associations of the FHRAI organised a series of capacity building training programmes for Food Production and Room Division and F&B Service staff of hotels and restaurants. The objective of the training programmes was to reinforce knowledge and update skills of the workforce employed in existing hospitality establishments in the country.

The programme was rolled out in seven batches starting from June 3, 2021 and concluded on June 30, 2021. Venkatesan Dhattareyan, Regional Director – West & Central Region, India Tourism, Mumbai inaugurated the first batch which trained 640 hospitality professionals under the stated programmes.

“The training programmes have been developed to strengthen the skill sets of the entry-level or junior staff working in the Food Production and the Room Division & F&B Service departments at hotels. We were anticipating somewhere around 100 to 120 participants for the first batch but were pleasantly surprised to receive an overwhelming response.

Over 640 hospitality professionals from across the country registered and participated in the training programmes. The trained participants were awarded certificates upon successful completion of all four sessions of about an hour across the selected modules,” says **Arun Kumar Singh**, Director, FHRAI-IHM.

Regional hotel and restaurant associations of the FHRAI – HRAWI, HRANI, HRAEI and SIHRA extended support and urged its members to nominate staff for the trainings. The training sessions were held under the direct supervision of Arun Kumar Singh. Dr Himanshu Talwar, Addl. Director of FHRAI-IHM and Asst. Secretary General of FHRAI coordinated and facilitated the programmes.

“We thank Venkatesan Dhattareyan for his valuable time to motivate the participants before the commencement of the programme. He emphasised on the need of conducting such



**Arun Kumar Singh**  
Director, FHRAI-IHM


“**640+ professionals participated in the programmes**”

knowledge imparting programmes on a regular basis for keeping professionals up to date on the developments and best practices in the industry. On the back of such tremendous response, we plan to organise more training programmes that will help hospitality professionals gain insights on international best practices & developments in the field”, says Singh.

The programmes covered different aspects of hospitality management including Hospitality and Chef as Professionals, Food Safety – Understanding Contaminants; Safety, Hygiene, Preservation & Good Practices, General Concerns & Spirit of Hospitality under the training module for Food Production Department. In the training for Room Division & Food Service Department, the module covered topics on Interpersonal skills, Body language, Listening skills, Empathising & mindfulness.

# Safety comes first

Regional Presidents talk about how the hospitality industry is rising to the challenges and contributing towards creating a healthy, sustainable virus-free environment.

 Fhrai Bureau



**Sherry Bhatia**  
President, HRAWI

## COMPENSATE EMPLOYEES

The hospitality industry is the worst affected sector in the country today. Businesses of a majority of hotels, restaurants, and bars have come to a complete standstill making

even survival a challenge. The HRAWI has appealed to the state governments to compensate employees engaged in the industry and their families for the loss of income, and also support hoteliers and restaurateurs by waiving off all statutory fees, taxes, and utility bills. The association has also made a representation to the government to waive off state GST until the situation normalises.

## SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT

Hotels and restaurants provided their support to the government by offering rooms for housing quarantined passengers, doctors, health



**Sudesh Poddar**  
President, HRAEI

## VACCINATION DRIVE

HRAEI joined hands with the Tourism Department, government of West Bengal, to start a mass vaccination drive for hospitality workers in various venues in Kolkata

rooms to serve as satellite centres of hospitals that were within a 2 Km-radius of respective hospitals. The patients were treated under the care and guidance of medical teams, as per the guidelines and advisories framed by the Union Health Ministry and the State Health Department.



  
**HRAWI has appealed to the state govts to compensate employees & their families** 

workers and the police, among others while restaurants served meals to the needy.

Several hotels and restaurants across the state and cities have taken the onus of getting their staff vaccinated through privately organised drives.

  
**We launched the 'Dine Out to Help Out' initiative to help the F&B industry** 

in early June 2021. The state government set a target to vaccinate 6 lakh people in the hospitality sector in phases, in order to reopen the industry after a long lockdown.

## SATELLITE CENTRES

In April 2021, when COVID-19 cases spiked, HRAEI joined hands with the Association of Hospitals of Eastern India (AHEI) to offer 2,000 hotel

## 'DINE-OUT TO HELP OUT' INITIATIVE

In October 2020, we launched an initiative called 'Dine Out to Help Out' to help the F&B industry, support local restaurants and establishments affected by lockdown. The aim of the initiative was to reinstate employees of the F&B sectors who had lost their jobs. The participating establishments offered a flat 20% discount on food and non-alcoholic beverages to all their patrons from Monday to Thursday. The scheme was designed as a 'pull-mechanism' for diners to encourage them to come out of their homes and patronise their favourite restaurants, bars & hotels.





**K. Syama Raju**  
President, SIHRA

### REVIVING TOURISM

Tamil Nadu government has formed a 16 member advisory committee consisting of officials and stakeholders to revive tourism in the state post-COVID. In the first committee meeting SIHRA represented to open up the hill stations like Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yercaud etc. with proper SOPs. The request was considered by the govt considering the revenue loss hoteliers are going through

### INDUSTRY STATUS

Karnataka has granted industry status to the classified hotels in the state. This would benefit the hotels to get subsidies and levies applicable to industries and boost recovery of the hospitality sector. Karnataka government has now waived off property tax for six months and demand charges for three months and three months extension for payment of FL3 licence fee. Maharashtra is the only other state which has approved industry status for hotels. The need of the hour is that the hotels in every state should get the industry status which would help in reviving

**Hotels in every state should get industry status to help revive the sector**



and all hill stations opened at par with all other districts for the first time in Tamil Nadu. SIHRA has represented to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Tourism and Culture which met recently in Chennai about the difficulties of the hoteliers and submitted a request to put forth the difficulties faced by the hoteliers to the Government of India.

the hospitality sector. By being classified as an industry, hotels would automatically get the benefits of concessions in tariffs and taxes at par with industrial rates and ability to borrow from banks also would be easier. SIHRA is representing to all the state governments in south to approve industry status for the hotels in the southern states.



**Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**  
President, HRANI

### ENSURING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

As an industry we have seen unprecedented times since the last 15 months. Some green shoots cropped up during the first quarter but then the second wave struck, hitting the industry harder than the first wave. The pandemic has proved to be a test of our times, our commitment towards society, towards our staff and, of course, towards our businesses. We have to discharge our responsibilities at so many levels now.

Governmental regulations and guidelines are for the 'greatest good' and we have to do our best at all times to ensure a safe and COVID-free environment for our staff, guests and citizenry. Health and hospitality now walk hand-in-hand as the hotels and restaurants have started operations.

### CREATING AWARENESS

Vaccination camps for hospitality staff have been organised by HRANI and its counterparts in the various cities. Representation for priority vaccination to hospitality & tourism workers was also sent to the Chief Secretary of all ten states & UTs located in North region by



**Slowly and steadily, the hospitality sector will be back to normal**

the association. Safety posters have been placed in the properties to reassure that all safety measures are being taken care of. Sanitisation methods are compulsory before entering every hotel or restaurant. Masks and gloves are compulsory for all staff members who strictly adhere to these policies for their own safety as well as the guests' safety. Screening and temperature checks of all guests and staff on arrival is a part of the daily routine. The industry has made investments in technology to sustain the inflow of people and in turn, revenue. Slowly and steadily, the hospitality sector will be back to normal but with a safer and more hygienic experience. Social distancing norms are a big part of the picture, at least in the near future. The industry is rising to the challenges and will put in best efforts to create awareness & help government to contribute in creating a healthy, sustainable virus free environment.



# ‘Footfalls will pick up’

We fared reasonably well during the second wave – with long staying guests, home delivery & celebratory stays, says **Anupam Dasgupta**, GM, The Leela Palace New Delhi.



**Anupam Dasgupta**

## **How has the second wave been for your hotel?**

The second wave of COVID-19 has affected our business just as it has impacted every other business in most industries. We fared reasonably well on limited opportunities during the second wave – with a few long staying guests, home delivery of food and celebratory/honeymoon stays for some guests.

## **Are you getting footfalls since the lockdown has eased?**

There has been a gradual increase in footfalls since the lockdown restrictions have eased. We certainly don't foresee a sudden influx of people in the near future. The increase in footfalls shall remain gradual as businesses reopen gradually too.

## **What are the health and safety protocols that you are following for your guests?**

At the Leela Palace New Delhi, the safety of our guests and associates is of paramount importance to us. We refined our hygiene protocols under our campaign 'Suraksha by The Leela'. This is a holistic approach we adopted to elevate our health, safety and hygiene protocols with stringent measures that ensure a safe environment while our guests

continue to enjoy the opulent and indulgent services. Suraksha is grounded in genuine care and is backed by unobtrusive technology. We have implemented the following health, safety and hygiene protocols.

- Protective gear including masks, gloves and PPE kits for all our associates to provide a safe environment for our guests
- Regular temperature checks of all associates and partners upon entering the hotel premises
- Restaurants seating that ensures social distancing
- Digital menus that can be viewed by guests on their respective phones
- Placement and use of hand sanitisers in all areas
- Introduction of natural immunity boosting beverages which help guests stay healthy
- Contactless check-in and check-out facility provided with the privilege of paying through phone at check-out
- Each guest room is fully fumigated and sanitised and allotted only after a minimum of 24 hours
- Adherence to international certifications and standards while considering the guidance and information shared by experts from our partner team

## **Do you have any innovative plans or any new launches?**

We are coming up with innovative menus at our award-winning restaurants and special holistic stay packages that we are excited to launch very soon. Since the environment is looking more positive and things are getting better, we really hope we continue moving on this trajectory.



**We are coming up with innovative menus & holistic stay packages**



# Mumbai market buoyant

While India's hotel occupancy has been on a rapid decline amid the second wave, Mumbai saw the highest occupancy level (43.2%) among STR-defined markets.



Hazel Jain

India's monthly occupancy reached a pandemic high in February (53.9%), which looked to be solid progress toward recovery as the monthly level was roughly 73% of the 2019 comparable. By April, however, occupancy in the country fell to 31.0%, and more recently, just 21.5% for the week ending 30 May. **Vidhi Godiawala**, STR's Business Development Manager for South and Central Asia, says, "We saw India's resilience as an emerging market play out over the early portion of 2021. Unfortunately, massive lockdowns have restricted movement and business over the last few months, thus causing hotel performance to lose steam. Until March of this year, India and China were trading places for the highest intention to travel. While current travel sentiment remains clouded, recovery from the first wave gives us reason to believe there is light at the end of the tunnel for hotels in the country."

While the country as a whole has fallen back to late-2020 levels, some markets are experiencing more

promising metrics. During the week ending May 30, Mumbai saw the country's highest occupancy level (43.2%) among STR-defined markets, which was 60% of the comparable week in 2019. The market, however, is expected to experience flattened demand levels in 2022. Chennai (38.3%) and Gujarat (32.2%) also saw higher occupancy levels with better 2019 comparisons. Sharing some data on the estimated number of hotels that have closed down since COVID hit us, Godiawala says, "We cannot comment on the future possibilities and permanent closures. However, our data presently shows 270 properties (20,067 rooms) temporarily closed in India due to the pandemic. As of now, we see eight properties that are permanently closed in India."



Vidhi Godiawala



**Our data presently shows 270 properties temporarily closed in India**



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sarovar in Srinagar

Sarovar Portico, Srinagar is scheduled to open in early 2022 and will offer well-appointed rooms, modern facilities, restaurant and banquet spaces.

Sarovar Hotels and Resorts, one of the fastest growing hotel management company in India announced the signing of another hotel in Srinagar. This will be Sarovar's second hotel in Srinagar.

Sarovar Portico, Srinagar is scheduled to open in early 2022 and will offer well-appointed rooms, modern facilities, restaurant and banquet spaces. The beauty of Srinagar will be well imbibed in the interiors of the hotel while providing all modern facilities, ensuring that your stay is most comfortable. The hotel is located at the Airport Road, Humhama area and is just 4 kms away from the airport and 9 kms from the bus station and railway station. Needless to say, the incredibly famous Dal Lake is one of the most favoured vacation destinations in Srinagar. Along with this, other must visit places are Shalimar Bagh, Mughal Garden, Nishat Bagh, and Tulip Garden. Commenting on the development, **Anil Madhok**,



Executive Chairman, Sarovar Hotels and Resorts, said, "We are delighted to be consolidating our presence further in the 'land of lakes and gardens'. It's a significant addition to our rapidly growing footprint in the leisure portfolio and reflects the strong traction the brand is gaining in the region."



# Creating demand post-COVID

**Kingshuk Biswas**, Sr. Executive, Gujarat Power Corporation Limited delves into how the tourism industry can generate demand in such a dismal scenario.



**Kingshuk Biswas**

All of a sudden 'Healthcare' has become the most discussed and debated topic in practically every household/family in India. According to the global research information published by online travel booking platform giant Booking.com, 86% Indian travellers would take more health and safety related precautions when travelling in the future. It also states that more than 70% Indians would avoid certain destinations altogether due to safety concerns. 77% of Indian travellers will only book a particular accommodation if it's clear what health and hygiene policies it has in place, with almost 80% favouring accommodations that have antibacterial and sanitising products. The tourism industry is dependent on customer expectations and currently customer demand is practically negligible or at very low levels. So the moot question is how does the tourism industry

generate demand in such a dismal scenario? Here are my suggestions for 'creating demand' for the industry.

## MARKET SAFETY, HYGIENE AND GREEN PRACTICES

Interesting in the post-COVID scenario, I am seeing lot of hotels across India offering attractive packages to lure the customers. But the attractive packages focus primarily on the 'price factor'. So I wonder that as a customer is 'price' going to be the motivational factor for me to travel with family post-COVID? Or as a customer I would be more concerned about 'safety and hygiene' and 'seclusion'. Post-COVID-19 for customers' family, friends, health, safety will be the key motivators and not 'price' alone. Let me share with you some interesting results of a quick search of the major OTAs:

- Booking.com has a filter for hotel search which mentions 'properties with 'additional health & safety measures'
- MakeMyTrip has a search filter of 'safe and hygienic stays'.



**It is high time that hotels start promoting their green practices & hygiene factors**





media platforms of the State Tourism Boards in India post-COVID-19, most of them have been aggressively promoting unknown/lesser known destinations which also incidentally promote social distancing. There is a marked shift towards green, sustainable tourism as more tourists are expected to opt for eco-friendly travel in the post-COVID-19 world. Many of the OTAs now have separate sections on experiences and tours. Again few findings from the OTAs:

- Thrillophilia which is majorly into experiences and tours has a separate section 'Away from the crowd'.
- Viator the international OTA specialising in tours has amongst many sections interesting sections like 'unique experiences' and 'outdoor activities'.
- Similarly MakeMyTrip has destination-wise activities listed for various cities. Since I am from Gujarat,

### Booking.com Travel report

#### The key findings for 2020 were:

- **54%** of global travellers said they want to go on one long trip to a destination that has all of their favourite activities & sights close together.
- **71%** of global travellers said that eating locally sourced produce is important to them when on vacation.
- **60%** were keen to have access to a service (app/website) that recommends destinations where an increase in tourism would have a positive impact on the local community.

- Oyo has a search filter for 'sanitised b4 ur eyes'
- Yatra has a search filter for 'clean pass'
- Goibibo has search filters for availability of gloves, face shields, hospital in the vicinity, etc.
- Expedia has a filter for hotel search on 'Enhanced cleaning-Properties taking additional steps to clean and sanitise'.
- Skyscanner has a hotel search filter for 'cleanliness'
- Also Interestingly on TripAdvisor there is a hotel search filter of 'electric vehicle charging station'

Hotels/Homestays will have economic incentives to differentiate themselves from competitors by demonstrating that their accommodations/services are safe, clean and equipped to keep guests safe. The point I am trying to make is that it is high time that hotels start promoting their green/sustainable practices, hygiene factors, COVID-free environment, etc. rather than just offering price discounts.

### CULTURALLY IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

There is already a lot of action going on as regards to unique experiences and activities and tours in the post-COVID scenario. Having a cursory look at the social

I am aware of the electric bike tours in Gujarat being offered on the site. Tour operators thus are perfectly poised to promote and highlight the cultural identity of the destinations. This strategic and smart investment in creating new unique local experiences would stand a long way in their recovery.

The COVID-19 crisis has led to the behavioural change of social distancing and seclusion. We in the industry have seen how luxury travel has boomed in Maldives, as the destination offers complete seclusion. In India currently boutique hotels/homestays away from city are doing much better than the city hotels. There is an emerging trend for booking the entire property just between family and friends and customers are ready to pay for that privilege and exclusivity. Tour operators are experiencing more focus of customised travel itineraries rather than large group bookings. Customers want immersive experiences at one destination with guarantee of seclusion.

*(The views expressed are personal. Currently Kingshuk Biswas is Sr. Executive, Gujarat Power Corporation Limited. He is also on the UNWTO panel of Tourism Experts.)*

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# Choosing 'safe' travel

FHRAI EC members talk about how their top priority continues to be the health and safety of guests and team members as once people start feeling safe the entire industry will regain its glory.



Fhrai Bureau



## Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar Executive Director, HRH Group of Hotels

### WE HAVE TO EXERCISE ENORMOUS CAUTION

As far as revival of the industry is concerned, it would be too early to start counting the eggs. We are all too happy to note that the lockdown is being slowly and steadily dismantled in different cities of India. We still have to exercise enormous caution. Whether it is a heritage-city like Udaipur, heavily dependent on tourism, or the metro cities of India, people want to get out of their homes and cities to travel. One can understand those emotions.

### PRE-COVID LEVELS OF TOURISM

The pre-COVID levels of tourism now seem like a dream. Let it remain as one, we should not make any comparisons. At the same time, we as hospitality professionals have to exercise complete safety, security and follow the governmental regulations on the pandemic.

### WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER

Since foreign air travel has been severely restricted, we may not see foreign tourists in our land for some time. As the pilgrim centres open up, following all the safety norms, we may witness domestic tourists visiting their places of worship.

In the current scenario our top priority at HRH Group of Hotels continues to be the health and safety of all our guests and team members. A set of carefully formulated standards of procedures have been developed by us in line with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), World Health Organization (WHO) and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). All our staff members have been equipped with masks, gloves, face shields and PPE where necessary. They have been trained for minimal contact and communication while serving guests and will be maintaining a 2-metre distance from both guests and each other.

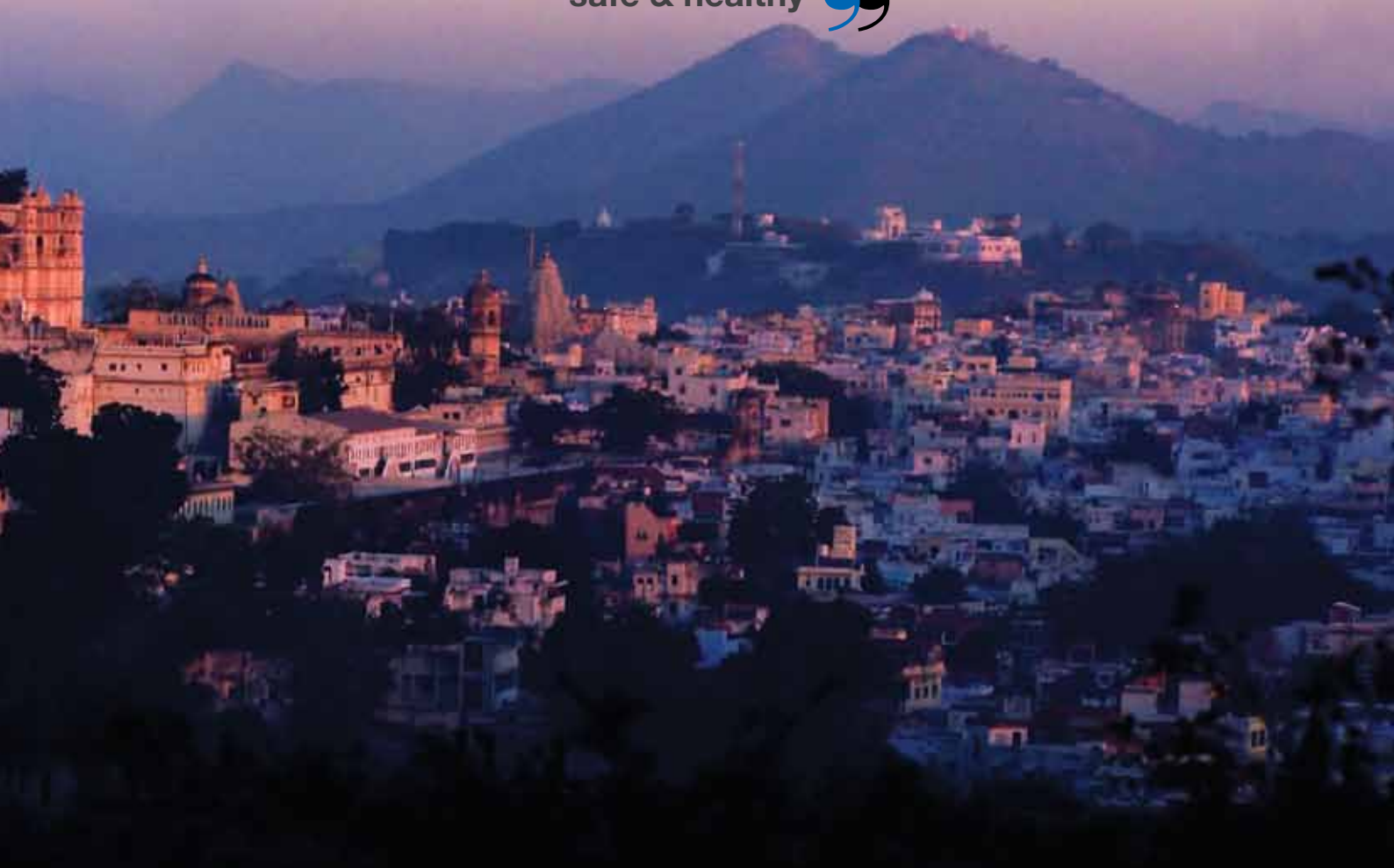
We are complying with all regulations and ensuring that our guests remain safe, healthy and protected throughout their stay with us. This is the need of the hour and I pray we all work together and stay safe together.



**Lakshyaraj Singh  
Mewar**



**We are ensuring that our guests remain  
safe & healthy**





**Param Kannampilly**

## **Param Kannampilly** **Chairman & Managing Director, Concept Hospitality**

### **BUSINESS IS COMING FROM THE NEARBY PLACES**

It would be presumptuous to say that the hospitality industry is entering into revival mode. What we have seen is business happening in certain leisure destinations. Another factor to be considered is that the people are only going to places within their vicinity. They are too happy to drive as it is the safest proposition under the prevailing conditions. It is too early to comment on such a scenario.

The revival of the industry will start when people feel safe enough to take trains or fly to reach their destinations. Once that happens a lot of other ancillary industries will also pick up. This will also lead

to the overall economic activity gaining momentum. And most importantly the sentiment that travel is now safe will gain currency. Once people start feeling safe the entire industry will regain its glory.

The whole country, especially north India is reeling under severe hot weather. The mercury is soaring, and people are flocking to mountains to get respite from the weather. This has certainly given rise to occupancies. The ARR's are still not good. Similarly, the business has been good in other beach destinations, however it still cannot be termed as a revival. I can say this with some authority as we have a lot of properties in mountains, hills, beaches, jungle safaris etc. We are offering very attractive rates to woo the customers. We are getting traction also, but as I said above, the business is coming from the nearby places.

### **IT WILL TAKE TIME TO REACH PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS**

To achieve the pre-pandemic levels is still a tall order. Fortunately, there has been a significant drop in the number of cases. With more and more people getting vaccinated, the scenario looks optimistic. However, there are epidemiologists who are talking about the third wave. God forbid, if it happens, it would spell doom for the industry. But if the third wave doesn't hit, then we are surely on the path towards revival.

We can hope that the occupancies will steadily rise in the metros and other urban centres. This will eventually lead to ARR's also rising. This is going to take at least six months. In 2022 we will hopefully return to the pre-COVID levels.



**The third wave would spell doom for the industry**



**Paramjit Singh Ghai**

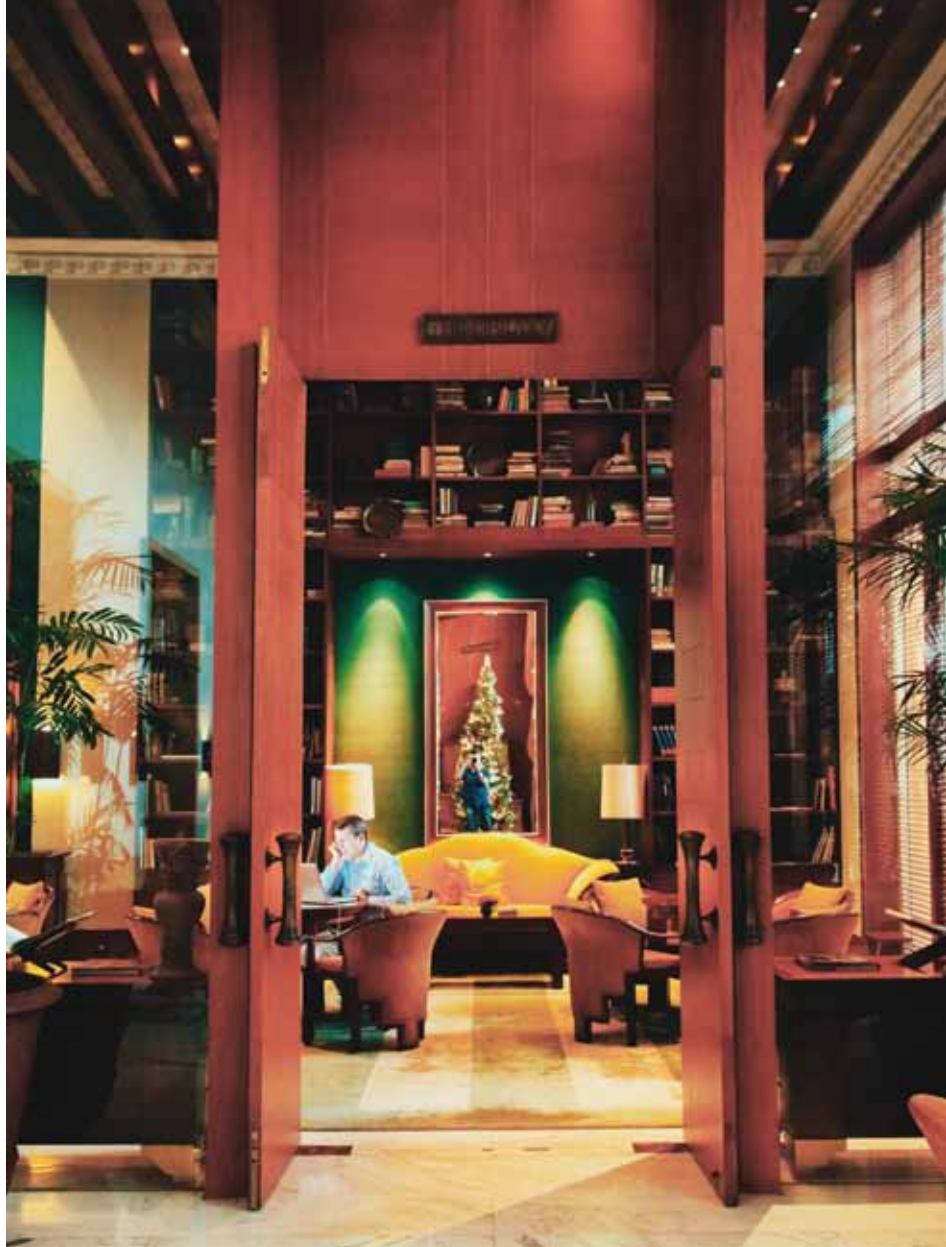
**Paramjit Ghai**  
**Chairman & Managing Director**  
**Hotel Unicontinental**

**CHANGES IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR**

The prognosis for revival of the hospitality industry at a global level and state level continues to be uncertain as countries and states seem to be following differing strategies for opening up and in fighting this pandemic. The most important factor at this stage is the 'Vaccine Passport' or 'RTPCR Test' and the approach different countries and states are following, preferring to err on the side of caution. The lifting of travel restrictions and administration of the vaccine is not enough for people to travel again.

The hotel industry has to become aware of the changes in consumer behaviour. The frequent international traveller in the absence of international flights and ban on flights from India to several countries is now heading for local destinations. This will impact when and where they decide to spend their money. For instance, we are witnessing 'Revenge Travelling' and a resurgence and bounce back of tourists in hill station resorts. After the state governments recently allowed tourists the option to carry negative rapid antigen tests (in place of RTPCR Test) to gain entry, hotel owners said weekend bookings had surged to 50% occupancy. They said they were expecting more bookings once further relaxations are allowed and the unlock process is completed.

Even at the global level, there is some intra and inter country travel opening up. It is interesting to note that a global future travel survey conducted in April 2021 suggests a more optimistic outlook. The survey reveals people want to travel with around half of the people (more than 50%) across countries worldwide saying they'll book a trip in 2021 itself and do so as soon as travel restrictions are lifted or eased. The survey also revealed that 75% of respondents plan to travel with family, having spent so much time apart; they are ready to reunite with loved ones. It added that more than 50% people intend to travel regionally or domestically while 40% still want to travel to another continent.



**We are seeing a resurgence of tourists in hill station resorts**

Surprisingly, contrary to what perception is, over 80% of the participants were ready to travel by air.

**REACHING PRE-COVID LEVELS**

COVID-19 outbreak has presented unprecedented circumstances before the fragile tourism and hospitality industry and it might still be too early to predict when we will return to pre-COVID levels, but going by the current scenario, stringent health, hygiene and safety protocols will have to be followed to regain the trust of the traveller. I believe that we have a significant role to play in the revival of our domestic tourism industry. The quicker we adapt to 'Responsible Tourism' the faster will be the revival. Digitalisation, health and well-being and sustainability will have to be factored in the plans of every established as well as emerging hospitality player. Confidence, security and comfort will be the key to reviving tourism and hotels will need to contribute to generating peace of mind.



# Creating benchmarks

Decades of research & innovation has been the key reason why Sealy is the bestselling bed in the world, says **Vinod Khatri**, National Manager – Contract Sales, Sealy India.



**Vinod Khatri**

**A** healthy body and mind come from healthy sleeping habits. A good night's sleep requires comfort and support that can only be offered by a durable mattress.

Sealy, a global provider of mattresses for over 135 years combines all the requirements of a perfect night of sleep into one quality mattress.

**Vinod Khatri**, National Manager – Contract Sales, Sealy India, says, "A leader in the bedding industry, Sealy Posturepedic has created benchmarks by focussing on the

importance of correct back support and its painstaking research has ensured comfort, support and happier sleep-time hours.

In India, Sealy is bedding partner with top hospitality brands like Taj Group, The Oberoi Group, and ITC Luxury Collection Hotels. We have serviced international hotels like Four Seasons, Fairmont, Raffles, J W Marriott, Ritz Carlton, Le Meridien, Sheraton, Courtyard, Four Points, ALOFT, Hyatt, Oakwood, etc.

Sealy has also partnered with iconic projects, for instance, the Marina Bay Sands Singapore, Venetian Macao, Burj Al Arab Dubai, LVMH Resort Maldives."

Khatri adds, "Sealy being the global mattress technology leader, constantly develops different specifications to meet the needs of hotel properties worldwide.

Our proprietary technology features include the PostureTech 'Sense & Respond' Coil, 'Triple Offset' Design, UniCased Construction and Patented Edge Guard.

Decades of research and constant innovation has been the key reason why Sealy is the bestselling bed in the world and sought-after by well-known international hotel chains worldwide."



“  
**In India, Sealy is bedding partner with top hospitality brands**”

# ‘Poised for recovery’

**John Spence**, Founder and Owner of Karma Group of Hotels and Visiting Professor at Yale University, shares his views on how the industry should cope in these trying times.

**C**learly, the pandemic has affected all of us in the hospitality industry. No more so in India, at the moment where we had to shut all of our resorts because of the situation. But when tourists can travel, resorts will be full, and we'll do very good business. As herd immunity comes in, the lockdowns and the closures will become more limited. So, there can be more of a normalcy of service from the hospitality industry. I think it will bounce back very swiftly and we're going to have roaring 20s. At the end of this, COVID will probably last a long time, but when we know how to deal with it, then people are going to want to travel in droves. People want to spend now; they want to go out and reward themselves for having been locked down. They will also have a side element of fear that they might be locked down again in the future. So, all this is going to result in people travelling en masse. The only part of travel that might be affected is business travel. Companies would be tightening their budget, because of the losses they've made. So, they'll discourage all but essential business travel.

## CONSOLIDATIONS IN THE OFFING?

Mega hotel companies, the Marriotts, the Starwoods or Wyndhams or whatever are consolidating and they're consolidating for economy of scale and critical mass. That will continue to a certain extent, to the top ends. I think there's still enormous space for boutique hotels. I think the more that the mega brands homogenise and become more of the same thing, the more consumers want something a bit different. They want something that is a bit unique, a bit special, that's architecturally attractive, and that is responsive to the environment that it's in, and friendlier to the environment it's in rather than necessarily always going for the big consolidating. I think also people are going to like something that's a bit smaller, because of COVID. I think the general trend will go two ways – one, consolidation to the top end, two, more boutique hotels, with low density, small number of rooms, more unique, combined possibly with self-catering. Of course, also, what I think is going to bloom is our 'club' concept. People like being a member or something which they can recognise, and they can guarantee quality. And we very much view it as a lifestyle. So, we don't see ourselves as a lodging company. We see ourselves as having a long-term, lifetime relationship with the clients and their family. That is also a trend I see increasing in the years to come.

## VACCINATION FOR FRONTLINERS

It's interesting about hospitality. Not being considered frontline, not getting vaccinations. It's not unique. There are some countries, like the UAE and the Maldives, for instance that took a view right at the beginning to vaccinate hospitality, let's get the industry back on its feet. There are some places like India, and England, to be candid, that didn't take that view. Clearly, absolutely, I think it should be viewed as a frontline. I mean, we have vaccinated almost all members of our staff, on our own. We bought vaccines and vaccinated them ourselves in India. And I'm very very keen on having a 100% vaccination strike raised at all our resorts. So, anyone coming to stay with us knows that all staff are vaccinated. We will, in time, be insisting all clients be vaccinated to come to our resorts. And so, we can be a pure COVID bubble. And I do strongly feel that that's the way hospitality is going to go. So, I do think that yes, prioritising hospitality is a smart thing to do.



**John Spence**

*(This article has been written by John Spence, Founder and Owner of Karma Group of Hotels and Visiting Professor at Yale University, the views expressed are the author's own views.)*



**The trend will be consolidation to the top end & boutique hotels**



# Anticipating the third wave

Amidst the scare of an imminent third wave hoteliers talk about how they are going all out to lure guests with upscale experiences, enticing offers & state-of-the-art technology.



Sunil Kumar

## Sunil Kumar General Manager, The Westin Goa

### REACHING OUT TO EVERYONE

We are a new hotel situated in the Anjuna and have received good feedback from every guest who has stayed with us. Within a short span of time (just two months) we became the Number 1 hotel in Tripadvisor in Anjuna which is a difficult feat to rise to, so we are definitely growing and working towards reaching out to everyone in India who can come, explore and rediscover the beauty of this place and Goa with us in the coming future soon.

### NEW OFFERS

To make the hotel accessible and provide the best experience to our guests, we have announced a few offers that would not only benefit those looking at travelling but also help travellers seeking to travel in the long run. Some of our offers include:

- 'Breakfast at INR 1' wherein our guests can enjoy a curated breakfast at The Market
- 'Westin Staycation' which includes Breakfast and Dinner at The Market
- 'Heavenly Getaways' with Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner at The Market
- 'Westin Family Escapes' wherein a family can stay comfortably in two rooms and enjoy a curated breakfast at The Market
- 'Stay Smart Offers' are where guests pay for 3/5 stay for 4/7 nights

### SAFETY AND HYGIENE

We have provided several alternatives pertaining to check-in processes keeping in mind the current scenario. Our guests can opt for contactless room check-in while making a booking, along with the convenient option of making the payment digitally.

The hotel is also practising the initiatives under the global programme of 'Commitment to Clean'. This is to ensure that safety protocols are in place for vantage points of the guest experience -- encompassing the rooms and lobbies to the spa and dining.

Our restaurants have limited tables that are spaced out, ensuring there is always adequate distance maintained between diners. All of us at The Westin Goa prioritise the health and safety of every guest that checks-in to our heavenly abode.

### DIGITALISATION

Besides contactless check-in and check-out, we ensure that we are as digitalised as possible, be it menus or payments and also our areas are constantly cleaned with electrostatic sprays thrice every day.

### BOOSTING TOURISM

As a newly launched hotel, I am optimistic and looking forward to the day the restrictions are lifted. Yes, safety and hygiene will still continue to be of sheer importance for people.

Since Goa relies on tourists heavily it would not only help our state regain its footprint but also help boost the tourism sector and hospitality industry.



Within a short span of time we became  
the Number 1 hotel







**Pankaj Gupta**

## **Pankaj Gupta** General Manager, Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre

### **A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

IHG Hotels & Resorts has been at the forefront of creating a safe and secure environment for all our travellers. With IHG Way of Clean been implemented across all brands of IHG hotels globally, our travellers experience a standardised and robust hygienic environment for their hotel stays or dine-in experience. Some standardised protocols at Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre include mandatory wearing of mask and temperature checks, disinfected luggage and maintaining physical distancing at all times, reduced contact at check-in, touchless transactions, front-desk screens, touchless sanitiser stations, sanitised key cards, paperless checkout, contactless payments, etc.

### **FOCUS ON FEEDBACK**

We at Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre focus on feedback and reviews from our esteemed guests since they provide valuable insights on services, offerings, and changing travel patterns. This helps us evolve in our services and improvise on our opportunity areas. Our consistent service experience has helped us to ensure that we maintain high-ranking positioning on key travel portals and digital platforms. We offer a full-service upscale Holiday Inn experience with 172 keys including six suites, four F&B dining options and recreational facilities like gymnasium, outdoor rooftop pool, spa and

salon that helps our guest to relax and enjoy all facilities under one roof in a city centre hotel conveniently located close to major sight-seeing locations and the prominent 'bazaars' of Jaipur. Our brand hallmark 'Kids Stay and Eat Free' offers a special customised menu for our young travellers.

We are also very excited about the revival of domestic tourism in the state since it gives us the opportunity to showcase the hotel and our services. We ensure that the hotel offers all safety protocols defined by the government of Rajasthan and IHG Way of Clean. With exciting staycation packages, we offer a safe environment to our travellers along with an array of services to help them unwind and spend quality time with their families and de-stress.

### **NEW CONCEPTS**

Door-to-door home delivery was conceptualised last year during the lockdown to cater to our guests since they were unable to visit the hotel and enjoy their favourite cuisines. The menus were designed keeping in mind the best-sellers and the availability of the raw material during the lockdown. After a resounding response to last year's services, during this year's lockdown we reintroduced this service for our guests with enhanced safety measures and improved eco-



friendly packaging. The key factor to our success was the fact that we ensured that the hotel handled food end-to-end eliminating the need to incorporate a third-party delivery partner and ensure food safety and hygiene. This year, in addition to our extensive à la carte menu offerings, we also offered Buffet @ Home and specialised themed meals for our guests to savour the buffet experience in the comfort of their homes. Moreover, the IHG curated Assisted Buffet concept has been well accepted by our guests since it assures them of a no-touch dining experience during the busiest dining period of the day.



**We offer a full-service upscale experience with 172 keys**







**Rohit Chopra**  
**Regional Director – Sales & Distribution**  
**Accor India & South Asia**

**A FLEXIBLE APPROACH**

We are looking at everything quarter by quarter to stay aligned with changing guests' preferences and restrictions by the government and travel policies. We are taking a flexible approach, staying agile while keeping an eye on changing trends and demands of our guests. We have devised strategies with our teams across the network, that integrate Accor's ALLSAFE initiative which represents industry leading cleanliness and prevention standards, ensuring a safe holiday experience for our guests. As a practice, guest experience is at the heart of everything we do and so far, our campaigns and strategies have been appreciated by the guests & clients. We are vigilantly observing behavioural changes in guests and adapting accordingly by devising campaigns that fit needs and demands.

The foremost priority currently is the health & well-being of our staff – ensuring their safety & providing vaccinations are key. One of our earliest initiatives by Accor was ALL Safe, a programme developed alongside Bureau Veritas, a world leader in testing, inspections, and certification. It consists of over 200 standard operating procedures, keeping cleanliness and safety at the centre of all policies.

**EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY**

Touchless hospitality and a booming technology adaption in the industry has set the tone for a rise in cashless transactions for the sector. One of the big changes that we have embraced is adopting technology at every level, to ensure safety of our guest and staff. From room bookings, to check-ins, check-outs, and

payment procedures, digital posters, and digital menus, automation in revenue management, digital training of staff to using iAuditor – a self-assessment platform.

To provide a contactless guest journey, we have introduced Accor Key in our hotels globally, that provides guests access to their rooms without a physical key. We collaborated with Microsoft to launch ALL CONNECT, a new hybrid meetings concept supported by Microsoft Teams that will enable guests around the world to adapt to the new ways of working. This new offering will enable corporate customers and meeting planners to combine physical in-hotel meetings with virtual interactions across multiple locations simultaneously.

**VIRTUAL WEDDINGS**

For weddings, we rolled out 'Vivaah at Novotel' which is conceptualised for the contemporary virtual weddings and extends a hybrid approach. It offers an array of customised and flexible packages and guests can select a host hotel in any city as their wedding venue. To bring the couple's dear ones closer to them on their wedding day, the host hotel extends a web telecast of the wedding to their relatives and friends present in different cities. Two distinctive features of this initiative are Dawat by Novotel and Shagun by Novotel for food and gift hampers respectively which are the two integral parts of any Indian wedding.



**Rohit Chopra**



**We have introduced Accor Key in our hotels globally**



# Luxury homestays

Founded by **Sehar Shamim** along with Sanjay Wadhawan & US Jamwal, Earthaa Escapes which has opened its first homestay in Mashobra, comes as a breath of fresh air.


 Nisha Verma

**F**or **Sehar Shamim**, the Earthaa Escapes brand is an amalgamation of a luxury hotel and a private homestay. "Earthaa is a luxury homestay start-up creating curated experiences for the discerning traveller. The brand is being positioned to fill a gap in the market. Travellers had to earlier choose from a fully serviced hotel or a non-serviced homestay, wherein they had to buy groceries, cook food and clean after themselves, thereby taking away valuable family time during their breaks. Earthaa intends to fill this void by providing fully serviced homestays for the traveller who wants to sit back and enjoy their holiday. Earthaa provides the service of a luxury hotel with the privacy and space of a homestay," she says.

In fact, they came up with the concept of Earthaa during their stay at homestays over the past couple of years. "There we had to end up buying groceries and cooking, and then leaving the unused groceries behind. Being hoteliers, it was an obvious gap in the market, which we could see. Also being into more experiential holidays, we felt this was the future of the holiday market," she points out. The company's flagship property, Aranya, at Mashobra, has seen great response within a couple of months of its launch and is running at 100% occupancy. However, expansion is



on cards. "We plan to bring 20 homes under our umbrella this financial year and reach a milestone of 50 homes in two years. We will be focusing a lot on our operational excellence within each home. Currently, we are looking at many locations, including Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Goa to begin with," Shamim shares. For sales, they are reaching the consumers through different channels. Shamim believes that experiences like Earthaa would change how travel is perceived in India. "Earthaa is poised to bring a steep change in the experiential holiday market through its curated experiences in luxury, fully serviced homestays. We believe the discerning traveller is ready for this change and the market will grow by leaps and bounds," she concludes.

  
**Earthaa provides the service of a luxury hotel with the privacy of a homestay**





# ‘We are on track’

**Chandan Pandey**, Co-Founder & COO, WB Hotels & Resorts, hopes that hotels will start doing well with at least 50-60% occupancy by the beginning of October 2021.



Hazel Jain

## **Within a year, how have you managed to add on more than 100 hotels?**

Yes, we launched our hotel brand WB Hotels & Resorts in October 2020 and we signed our first hotel in November 2020. As of today we have 100+ hotels under our brand in 17+ states and 35+ locations, with more than 2,100 rooms and growing. Technically we have added 100+ hotels from November to March – within five months only – as April and May 2021 was a complete wipe out. Our vision is very clear. Since I come with more than 21 years of leadership experience in hospitality, it helped me make all the right decisions at the right time. We have aligned our team accordingly and distributed responsibility to team leaders to reach our numbers.

## **What are some of the lessons you have learnt amid the pandemic?**

We have understood that only a technology company can grow very fast. We will remain technology-centric and a human resources company for standalone hotels

on a global level. In parallel, we are bringing India its first tech-based hotel brand which will work with four employees only. We are in the final stages of developing the unique technology for the travel agents so that they can access our real-time rates for all the hotels which will be cheaper than the OTA rates. We are already having more than a 3,500 active travel agents’ database. All travel agents will be requested to join our platform to access our hotel on pan-India level.

## **What is your perspective on the hotel industry landscape for 2021-22 in India?**

We are hoping that by beginning of October 2021 hotels will start doing well with at least 50% to 60% of occupancy. By April 2022, the hotel industry will bounce back with 80- 90% occupancy with better ARR. We estimate that about 12% to 13% hotels closed down and hotels on lease model also got affected due to the pandemic. When the industry is back with real occupancy levels, with fewer hotels in the market, it will boost the ADRs, ARRs and RevPAR.



Chandan Pandey

## **About WB Hotels & Resorts**

Launched in September 2020, WB Hotels & Resorts offers services to hotels, resorts, BNB, service apartments and townships. It offers co-branding services on an online platform, complete revenue management, centralised reservations, and account reconciliation. It offers software in a bundled package to asset owners, channel managers and Cloud-based front offices. Technically, it runs hotels remotely and does not charge any upfront payment – it works on commissions only.

## **Is your plan for 10K keys by Dec 2022 still in place?**

Yes we are very much on track, in fact we have increased our Business Development team to other locations and in the coming months we will add more people to expedite these numbers.



**By April 2022, industry will bounce back with 80-90% occupancy**



# Sustainability in businesses

Experts share how and why tourism should be a flagbearer of sustainability and how hotels, airlines and travel companies are making sure that being responsible is the way forward.



Nisha Verma



**Atul Bagai**

## **Atul Bagai** Head India Country Office United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

There is a need for all stakeholders to come together. When MOT comes up with the national strategy and roadmap for sustainable tourism, it should bring together a multitude of departments and ministries that impinge upon the tourism sector. It should also bring in other stakeholders and most importantly the tourism industry needs to play a prominent role. I am heartened to see the kind of initiatives that the industry is taking to bring the environment and the tourism sector close to each other for the preservation of biodiversity and the ecosystem. One of our recent green economy

reports highlighted the enormous potential of the tourism sector in the preservation of biodiversity, which will bring the cost ratio of 3:75 – a huge ratio for any sector. Tourism industry would be shooting itself in the foot if they do not care about nature. I often say that we are right now waging a third world war against nature and the slogan now should be, have peace with nature, and that's a very important approach that every stakeholder needs to take. The best practices need to be collated and scaled, and if we can do that in this decade it will be a very big achievement.



**Kamal Hingorani**

## **Kamal Hingorani** Chief Customer Service Officer SpiceJet

Ajay Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, SpiceJet, who is also very passionate about sustainability, made a statement at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in November 2018, during the climate summit, where he pledged that we should try and achieve 100 million passengers in domestic skies in India to be flying on sustainable fuel. We used the World Economic Forum platform to come up with a blueprint of how we will achieve that in 2030. The blueprint details what is the capital investment needed and the recommended policy intervention we want from the government. There were two very important things we asked



the government – firstly, get a policy on bio-jet fuels, which is non-existent in India and another thing we want is, bio-jet fuel under GST at five per cent and a possible VGF towards capping of industry plants and airlines for sustainable use of SAF. We have met the Petroleum Minister and he has said that he will support us.



**Ajay Bakaya**

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

As a group we are committed to giving back by converting hotels into medical assisted facilities during the pandemic. We adopted a model that builds people, responsibility and reimagines. We converted our hotels into hospitals, with facilities essentially taking care of COVID patients, and we had doctors, nurses, attendants. The hotel lobby was converted into a hospital reception and we had two ambulances parked outside. In an environment where the traditional hotel

business is difficult to come by for the next year or two or more, it's the middle way that works very well – a hybrid model, in the next few weeks, months and years, wherein hotels provide access to medical care. We had a couple who spent over 10 nights and left extremely happy. Overall, I feel that unless certifications for sustainability and best practices have been enforced and mandated by the govt, it becomes an uphill task to conform to sustainability standards.



**Dipak Deva**

**Dipak Deva**  
**Managing Director, Sita India,**  
**TCI Distant Frontiers and TCI Go Vacations**

I believe that if we don't have champions around, if we don't have a certification programme, if we are not seen as a destination that is going to take us to the next level in sustainability, we would have lost a great opportunity after COVID because every destination is going to start from the same starting point. Is India the one who is going to take the lead? Is our government the one who is going to make sustainability the most important pillar of their strategic initiative going forward? If the answer is yes, we have a very good chance.

The Travel Corporation of India (TCI) is going all out to move from a sustainable to a regenerative model of tourism to preserve the destinations for future generations. The organisation is taking steady strides towards making travel greener, smarter, developmental, and more responsible. TCI is promoting quality over quantity and making the right choices to achieve this futuristic concept. We are unequivocally dedicated to promoting and developing products and practices that support the sustainable model of tourism.



**Dr. Latika Nath**

**Dr. Latika Nath**  
**Conservation Ecologist & Photographer / Chairman & Founder at Hidden**  
**India Safari & Lifestyle Experiences**



We need to understand the difference between tourism and sustainability. To be sustainable in the long-term, we need to be responsible today.

We need to understand how important country planning is and hence we need architects and planners on board. We also need to understand as a society how important it is to conserve local culture, lifestyle, food habits and knowledge and that we don't lose that because modernisation and development come in, accompanying wildlife tourism. Also, building capacity needs to change. I find that the most well thought of and most successful lodges are those that are combining scientific research on conservation with the tourism experience and inviting people for longer stays and in-depth immersion into the site.

## Design Deconstruct's dining room

◆ Design Deconstruct has unveiled an exquisite dining room, which showcases timeless glamour. Furnished with one-of-a-kind furniture created in-house, and accentuated with awe-striking décor pieces and lighting fixtures, the space is a haven for its owners. This spectacular dining room showcases an extravagant yet intimate formal dinner setting. It features a striking 10-seater dining table made out of a single piece of white onyx. A floating crystal art piece is attached to the ceiling, over the dining table. There is also a stunning console made of brass and amethyst with a glorious chandelier hanging over it.



## Capsule Collection

◆ Born after a careful and in-depth research of the stylistic needs and trends of the moment, Momenti's Capsule Collection featuring the 'Eros and Psyche' sub collection, is the balm we are seeking in these troubled times. Brought to India by Ottimo, the collection is available with varied customisations for wallpaper, furniture and soft furnishings. The new Eros and Psyche collection creates an oasis of calm amidst these troubled times. The collection features soothing colours that lull our senses into a meditative calm. Tints, textures and geometries of varying chromatic intensity, gradients and contrast come together to exude a softness that is soothing yet sensual.

## RR Décor unveils Ikaria

◆ With the launch of Alhambra's latest collection, RR Décor reaffirms its commitment to offering eclectic and world-class contemporary choices. The new collection, Ikaria, pays homage to a haven of peace off the Turkish coast, amid the Aegean Sea. With their natural appeal and subtle hues and textures, the Ikaria collection offers a rare combination of the refined and the rustic look. There are very light linens, together with textiles with an air of raw and carded wool. The textures uncannily transmit the Mediterranean serenity.





## Plüsch introduces Storage System

◆ Plüsch's latest offering from Walter Knoll is a sleek and high on functionality piece of furniture – Storage System. Specially created for executive offices, conference rooms and home offices, the Storage System is composed of modular storage elements. Storage System comes in three practical design options – open shelves, a simple glass-fronted cabinet and, with doors and drawers forming a closed cabinet. One can even combine or use all these individual elements in a sequence to form different room concepts. The Storage System from Walter Knoll is as distinct as a tailor-made suit which allows freedom and can be easily reconfigured.



## Cane Boutique decor

◆ Spruce up your balconies and patios using a new collection of charming outdoor furniture by Cane Boutique, a Bengaluru-based bespoke furniture and home décor brand. This collection consists of stackable chairs in a range of designs, swivel chairs and tables. The woven chairs are made of resin weave and outdoor canvas fabric that is easy to maintain. The weaves used are different from what's usually employed, making them trendy and stylish.

## Proveda products

◆ Proveda India has launched new products to expand their skincare and hair care segment. Organic Mirakle Power C++ Day Cream and Mirakle 15 in 1 Hair Oil are made with a high concentration of natural ingredients. Organic Mirakle Power C++ Day Cream is a powerhouse rich in Vitamin C and collagen. Mirakle 15 in 1 Hair Oil is a premium hair oil powered with 15 natural ingredients proving to be a hair therapy oil.



## Home decor from Whiteteak

◆ Serving the insightful customers with homeware decor accessories that are as unique and individual as the customers themselves, The Whiteteak Company has unveiled the majestically designed 'Horse Inspired Home Decor Collection', which would be an eye-catching piece for any tasteful home. The collection has artefacts in different designs, styles, and sizes in the material of marble, resin with a combination of metal, cast iron in different finishes. Derby Champion is the antithesis to the famous Trojan horse, which represents power and transparency. The gilded curves of this magnificent beast symbolise a quiet strength.



# Tapping rural markets



FMCGs are tapping rural areas, says **Manish Aggarwal**, Director, Bikano.



**Manish Aggarwal**

**L**ike most sectors and indeed the larger economy, the FMCG companies too have not remained insulated from the effects of the pandemic. They have had to recalibrate their supply chain network and go-to-market strategies. And strengthening of the rural distribution network and firming up their rural supply chain management has been one of those adaptations. Among the many measures that FMCG companies undertook, revisiting their rural and semi-urban operations has been one pivotal initiative to boost their last-mile connectivity with end-consumers. Companies have gone to great lengths to extend their footprints to the semi-urban and the rural areas with an eye on fully tapping into any potential demand from the remotest and the most inaccessible terrain.

In addition to reworking and customisation of product portfolios with smaller SKUs and value packs, thousands of new distributors, dealers, stockists, sub-stockists and sales staff have been brought onboard by the FMCG companies exclusively targeting the rural market. Notably enough, many FMCG firms with significant food-based products as part of their product portfolio, have been reported to be prominently involved in ramping up their rural distribution network. Deployment of ready-stock van units has been another route to rural market for FMCG companies aimed at direct distribution. The pandemic has propelled the FMCG companies towards also exploring digital initiatives in rural areas, across both B2B and B2C channels. Of the nearly 550 million mobile users in rural India, a sizable 260 million are on internet enabling rural distribution for FMCG companies.

“Of the nearly 550 mn mobile users in rural India, a sizable 260 mn are on internet”

*(The article has been written by Manish Aggarwal, Director, Bikano. The views expressed are the author's personal views.)*

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# Appointments



**ABHISHEK SHARMA**

General Manager  
Raffles Udaipur

★ Raffles Udaipur, the brand's first forthcoming hotel in India, announced the appointment of Abhishek Sharma as General Manager. He has over two decades of experience in luxury hospitality. In his new role, Sharma will be leading the task of introducing the legendary Raffles brand to the country. Sharma joins Raffles Udaipur with over nine years of leading teams in the role of General Manager, throughout luxury hotels and resorts, including The Oberoi Group in India & Soneva Fushi Resort in The Maldives.



**ARINDAM BAHEL**

General Manager  
The Fern Brentwood,, Mussoorie

★ Arindam Bahel has joined as General Manager at The Fern Brentwood Resort & Spa, Mussoorie. He has completed his Diploma in Hotel Management from IHM Goa & has over 18 years of work experience in the hospitality industry with brands like Rodas-An Ecotel - Mumbai, Meluha The Fern - Mumbai, Amber - San Francisco, Rasam's IC Lounge - Sunnyvale, Concept Hospitality, Holiday Inn - Jaipur, Yak & Yeti - Kathmandu, etc. His last employment was with The Ananta, Udaipur.



**ANIRUDH SANJEEV**

Director of Sales and Marketing  
Hyatt Regency Chennai

★ Hyatt Regency Chennai has appointed Anirudh Sanjeev as the Director of Sales and Marketing. Sanjeev brings with him over 10 years of hospitality experience where he will be seen spearheading Sales and Marketing teams and focusing on key account management, strategic planning and business development. Sanjeev joined Hyatt Regency Chennai as Sales Coordinator in January 2011 along with the hotel pre-opening team. He was instrumental in setting up the Sales Function.



**PRASAD METRANI**

Director of Culinary  
Raffles Udaipur

★ Raffles Udaipur announced the appointment of Prasad Metrani as the Director of Culinary. With an illustrious career in culinary operations that spans over 15 years, Metrani will be spearheading the experiential and evocative food and beverage concepts that Raffles Udaipur will offer. A hotel management graduate from IHM, Hyderabad, he has worked with some of the world's leading Indian and international hospitality brands. He is proficient in a wide variety of global cuisines.



**SONIA SHARMA**

Associate Director – Talent & Culture  
Signum Hotels

★ Signum Hotels announced the appointment of Sonia Sharma as Associate Director - Talent & Culture. Sharma comes with over a decade experience in hospitality. In her last assignment, Sharma was HR Manager at Oblu Select at Sangeli, Maldives. An effective communicator and an Academic Certified Trainer, Sharma is skilled in developing initiatives that improve people management and growth. At Signum Hotels, Sharma will lead the company's Human Resources, Learning & Development initiatives.



**BHASKAR CHAKRABORTY**

Executive Pastry Chef  
JW Marriott Kolkata

★ Bhaskar Chakraborty is the Executive Pastry Chef at JW Marriott Kolkata. With an illustrious career spanning over 12 years in the hospitality industry, Chef Bhaskar brings a dynamic and innovative energy to JW Marriott Kolkata's eclectic culinary scene. Providing strategic and tactical leadership in facilitating overall performance of the baking department of the hotel, supervising teams to deliver excellent service along with retaining valued customers are some of his key responsibilities.

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