

HRA Today



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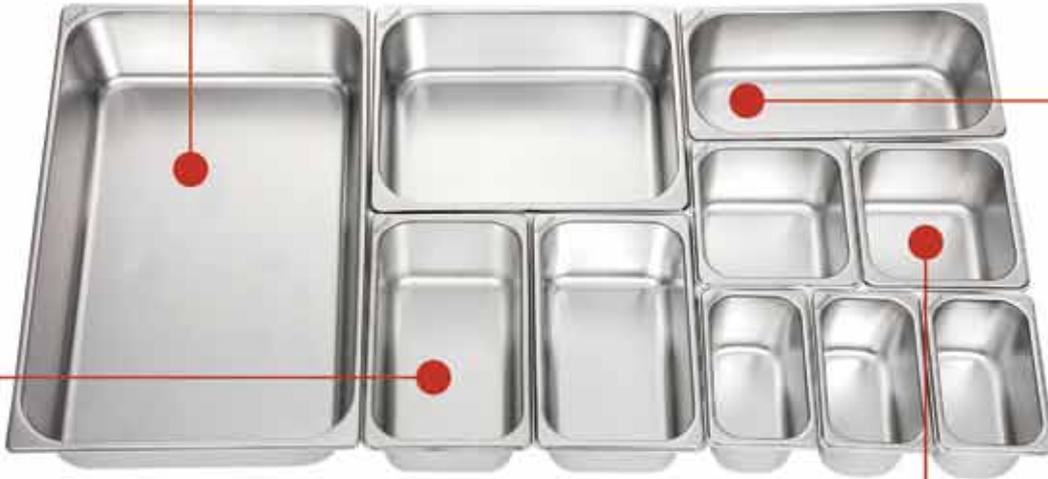
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Golf tourism revenue to double by 2021

With international tourists expected to grow in the next few years, it is important that India has the right product to meet the needs of visitors. **Peter Walton**, President and Chief Executive, International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO), says, 'India is an incredible kaleidoscope of destinations and experiences and so are the golf courses. I can see doubling of golf tourism revenue in India by 2021. India is still an undiscovered golf destination, even though you have 230 golf courses. Through golf, visitors will be able to experience India. 70 per cent of golf travellers are looking for a unique place which they have not discovered earlier.'

Sharing statistics on the value of the market, he adds, "Since the global economic crisis in 2008-2009 that impacted the entire leisure industry, golf bounced back within 18 months to two years because golfers will not be denied their annual golf travel fix. Since 2011, golf tourism has grown every year between 8-10 per cent — double the rate of an average growth of leisure tourism which is about 4 per cent. We now anticipate the rate of growth to slow down to 5-7 per cent per year for the next three years, mainly due to the lack of sufficient golf courses of a suitable standard

in destinations people want to travel to. So demand is still there but supply in the most popular destinations at the most popular time of the year is insufficient to cope with the demand. That is why new destinations like India can really take advantage."



Wyndham Garden to make its India debut?

Global hospitality major Wyndham Hotel Group may be looking to add new hotels in India by 2020 as part of its expansion plans in the country. Wyndham Hotels & Resorts boasts a strong inventory of 3,400 rooms in India.

Ignace Bauwens, Regional Vice President—Middle East, Eurasia and Africa, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, says, "If you look at India as a market and its evolution, the middle class is travelling more. What we need is more mid-scale hotels of quality. That's why I strongly believe that the brand that will be successful in India will be Wyndham Garden. This brand has the potential for growth in this market. We are still in discussions; the product is very specific, so we are looking for the right location. We have four brands that are active in India — Ramada, Ramada Encore, Howard Johnson and Days. We are looking for sites to develop 20 Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham for Eurasia, mainly India." The company currently has 35 operational hotels with 3,258 rooms under the Ramada, Ramada Encore, Howard Johnson and Days brands in India.



Goa trade wants state to plan tourism roadmap

The ban levied on serving alcohol after 11 pm by Election Commission of India (ECI) has pushed many tourists away. Concerned over the impact of the time restrictions and inflow of tourists, hoteliers in Goa submitted a representation to the Director, Department of Tourism seeking relaxation in timings as the tourism season is currently at its peak. In November last year, the state government made a draft public for comments — Tourism Policy and Masterplan by KPMG Advisory Services and Tourism and Leisure Advisory Services. However, the stakeholders of tourism industry were upset since there wasn't much for small-scale restaurateurs and businesses while the big players were taken into consideration. In the future, tourism officials want the state to plan a roadmap in a way that doesn't hamper tourist inflow. Goa has recently concluded its polls on April 23 and the Panaji assembly by-poll on May 19, 2019.



Sommet and IHG to develop talent

Building on a common commitment to prepare the next generation of industry leaders, Sommet Education institutions Glion Institute of Higher Education and Les Roches Global Hospitality Education have launched a partnership with InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG). Through this partnership, IHG will participate in the curriculum development across Sommet Education's portfolio of bachelor's and master's degree programmes by providing case studies for business projects and keynote speakers during the courses and for graduation ceremonies. In addition, IHG will increase its recruitment efforts at both Glion and Les Roches, giving students and graduates access to internships and job opportunities across its portfolio of brands with



more than 5,600 hotels in more than 100 countries.

"We are excited and proud to partner with global

hospitality education leader Sommet Education and its prestigious Glion and Les Roches institutions. The constantly-growing hospitality

industry is facing a shortage of skill; through this tailored collaboration, we aim to further develop the best industry talent of tomorrow and nurture a new generation of IHG leaders," said **Ranjay Radhakrishnan**, Chief Human Resources Officer, IHG.

"The mission of IHG to deliver true hospitality for everyone corresponds with our own outlook of developing the future leaders of the hospitality industry at large," said **Benoît-Etienne Domenget**, CEO of Sommet Education. "This collaboration will ensure that we provide students with the most relevant curriculum to further increase their employability and career progression," he added.

The Fern opens hotel in Polo Forest, Gujarat

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has opened The Fern Sattva Resort, Polo Forest, in Gujarat. Surrounded by forests on one side and the Harnav River on the other, this 30-room resort is located in Abhapur Village, Taluka Vijaynagar. The hotel has three room categories that include Winter Green Cottage, Fern Club Villa, and Hazel Suite. Facilities at the resort include a swimming pool, cycle tours, spa, forest tours with naturalists, a gaming zone, and an outdoor gaming area among others. The Fern Sattva Resort is surrounded by numerous picnic spots, and breakfast at the banks of river Harnav can also be arranged.



Marriott launches its first-ever food truck

Marriott International has launched Marriott on Wheels, its first-ever mobile food truck in India. Commencing its journey from Mumbai, the Marriott food truck will be seen travelling across six destinations in India, serving its patrons signature dishes and local favourites from Marriott properties in the respective cities. The food truck was flagged off in Mumbai by **Craig Smith**, President and Managing Director, Asia Pacific, Marriott International and **Neeraj Govil**, Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International, along with actor and producer **Saif Ali Khan**. Through this initiative, Marriott International aspires to manifest on the F&B strength of its select-serve brands Courtyard by Marriott, Fairfield by Marriott, Four Points by Sheraton, and Aloft Hotels. Upon its arrival in a city, an Executive Chef from a Marriott property will be present on-board, serving a limited-time menu, specially curated for the food truck.

Hope springs in 2019

According to the latest report by ICRA, the Indian domestic hotel industry is expected to register a steady growth of 10-11 per cent in this financial year. Hyderabad and Pune are expected to be strong growth markets over the next two years, while healthy demand will support Bengaluru despite heavy supply addition.

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The Indian hotel industry is expected to report a strong top-line growth of 10-11 per cent (as against ICRA's expectations of over 8.5 per cent) during FY2019, aided by a 5-6 per cent growth in RevPAR and increasing F&B (and MICE) income. This compares favourably with the 2.5 per cent reported growth during FY2018. The demand for rooms is expected to continue to grow by about 8-9 per cent y-o-y over the medium term, led by increasing domestic travel, buoyant MICE activity and higher FTAs, despite immediate term headwinds from geopolitical concerns and increasing local airfare.

This, aided by a low supply pipeline and robust domestic travel, will result in an estimated FY2019 RevPAR growth of 5-6 per cent. The RevPAR improvement is likely to be driven by uptick in both ARR and occupancy. Also, the RevPAR for FY2019

is likely to be the highest since FY2012.

The research is currently tracking a premium pipeline inventory of 102,400 rooms across 12 cities, up from 98,900 rooms in November 2018. The supply growth has

by 150 bps to 21-21.5 per cent during FY2019. Margins are expected to continue the growth trajectory during the next few years to hit a high of 26 per cent during FY2023. Debt reduction measures undertaken by certain large industry participants have

substantially to 14 per cent during FY2022."

The future of demand vs supply

ICRA expects the RevPAR for FY2019 to be the highest since FY2012. Strong demand in the gateway city of Mumbai will drive ARR. Healthy demand and limited supply in Delhi (which has about 75 per cent of the NCR inventory) is expected to drive ARR in the region, while Gurugram would continue to struggle in the immediate term because of the DIAL Aerocity supply.

Hyderabad and Pune are expected to be strong growth markets over the next two years, while healthy demand will support Bengaluru despite heavy supply addition. As for supply, although supply pipeline additions have picked up in the last few months, ICRA's premium room inventory database (12 key cities) across the country indicates a CAGR of 4.3 per cent in supply during FY2019-FY2023.

The expected growth is lower than the 12 per cent and 8 per cent compounded annual supply addition witnessed over the two terms of FY2011-2014 and FY2011-2018, respectively. Part of the incremental premium supply in FY2019 and FY2020 is coming from upscaling and rebranding of midscale hotels into premium category rooms. There are also several brownfield expansions in the pipeline.



increased from 5 per cent and 4600 rooms to 7 per cent and 5,800 keys in FY2020, with the biggest incremental supply in NCR and Goa. However, demand and supply gap will be the backbone for the current upcycle.

Commenting on the financial outlook, **Pavethra Ponniah**, Vice President and Sector Head - Corporate Sector Ratings, ICRA, says, "The industry's operating margin is expected to improve

resulted in sizeable reduction in industry leverage levels over the past two years. However, capex for larger players in the industry towards building new hotels will be limited going forward, as the Return on Capital Employed (RoCE) continues to be at sub-cost (lower than cost of) of capital and is expected to remain so at least until FY2020. This will discourage any major investments from these players. RoCE is expected to improve



Pavethra Ponniah

DY Patil introduces distance learning

In furthering its quest to provide education to one and all, DY Patil University has partnered with City & Guilds London to offer online distance learning graduation degree programmes in BSc Hospitality Studies, BSc in Culinary Studies, and Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA), which are bachelor degree programmes approved by Distance Education Bureau, UGC. The DY Patil University School of Online & Distance Learning has been established with the aim of offering comprehensive, accessible, and approved education through the mode of distance learning. These courses are designed in accordance with contemporary academic requirements and industry

standards. The college offers courses through international tie-ups and industry associations. It has tie-ups with Indian Culinary Forum (ICF), Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), World Association of Chef Societies (WACS), Hotel

and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI), etc. The college takes pride in its foreign collaboration with the University College of Birmingham, UK, as well as with City & Guilds.

Chancellor **Dr Vijay D Patil** believes that it is vision that one needs to achieve success.

The youth of today has a lot of promise and potential. It is this potential which needs to be harnessed to ensure indomitable progress of the nation.



Digital Marketing certification course

DY Patil University School of Hospitality & Tourism Studies (DYPU SHTS) is also starting with its first batch of certification course in digital marketing in association with Digital Ask. This has now become mandatory in every field. It is a three-month course over the weekend and the course fee is ₹50,000. Online examination will be conducted in the first week of August. Candidates will get two certificates after clearing the online examination: Google Certificate, and DY Patil in Association with Digital Ask certificate.

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Pride opens its 15th property in Rajkot

The Pride Group of Hotels, which manages 14 hotels and resorts across the country, has announced the inclusion of Pride Resort and Convention Centre Rajkot as the 15th property under the Pride umbrella. Announcing the launch, **SP Jain**, Managing Director, Pride Hotels, said, "We are extremely pleased to unveil Pride Resort and Convention Centre at Rajkot. This is also our third property in Gujarat. We are upbeat on the growth prospects in the region, having successfully managed our properties in Ahmedabad and Vadodara. The city of Rajkot has seen steady growth in inflow of travellers from India and across the



world. Pride Resort Rajkot, with its imposing ambience, banqueting and conferencing facilities and host of services, will appeal to all segments."

Pride Resort and Convention Centre Rajkot offers 99 rooms that encompass 31 Deluxe rooms, 31 Executive rooms, 31 Premium rooms, and six suites. The facilities include a

specialty restaurant with global culinary choices, 24-hour room service, fully-equipped business centre, banquet and conference halls, four party lawns, and dedicated parking areas.

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Best Western's SureStay Plus brand makes its India debut

Best Western Hotels & Resorts has launched its new SureStay Plus hotel brand in India with the opening of the first SureStay Plus hotel in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The hotel offers 57 rooms across three categories and eight suites. "We are delighted to unveil SureStay Plus Hotel by Best Western, an exciting midscale brand that will redefine the hotel landscape in Indore," said **Atul Jain**, Best Western's Chief Operating Officer for India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. "By combining the ease and affordability of midscale hotels with the international standards of a global chain, SureStay is sure to appeal to business and leisure travellers alike," he added.



Best Western Hotels & Resorts has 16 brands across the world. Independently owned and operated, each brand has its own personality and style, but all share the same commitment to delivering superior customer service, exceptional value, and modern amenities.

Apeejay Institute's 2019 batch graduates

The 10th batch graduated from the portals of the Apeejay Institute of Hospitality (AIH) on April 6, 2019, in a ceremony held at The Park Navi Mumbai. The chief guest for the ceremony was **Priya Paul**, Chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels.

The graduation ceremony this year commenced with a graduation march led by Paul along with **Anshu Sarin**, CEO, Berggruen Hotels, and followed by AIH professors and graduating students in full academic regalia. Laxmi Todiwan was the Master of Ceremonies.

While Sarin was the Guest of Honour, **Dr Harsha Mehta**, Governing Council Member, was among the dignitaries on the dais with Principal **Bhuvan GM**. Also present at the event were **Ravi Rawat**, General Manager, The Park Navi Mumbai and **Sanjeev Kacker** of

IHM Mumbai. Addressing the audience, Paul said, "One of the goals was that the curriculum at AIH not be the typical state or university mandated curriculum, but one that looks at hospitality with fresh eyes."

The special invitees were parents of final-year students, AIH alumni, principals of hotel management colleges in Navi Mumbai and Mumbai, hotel human resources and training managers, the team from The Park Navi Mumbai, and members of the institute's management committee.



Pune's cricket fervour

The Poona Hoteliers Association (PHA) organised its PHA Premier League from February 25-27, 2019 at the MA Rangoonwala ground in Pune. About 32 leading hotels of Pune competed to win the title of the cricket league spanning three action-packed days. The event was graced by dignitaries from Pune city as well as from PHA, including **Suresh Talera**, President of Honour; **Neerav Panchamia**, President; **Sharan Shetty**, Senior Vice President; **Avijit Chaturvedi**, Vice President; **Vineet Mishra**, Honorary Treasurer and General Manager of JW Marriott Pune; **Prantik Ray**, Honorary Secretary; **Aditya Malla**, Joint Honorary Secretary; **Prapti Deshpande**, Secretary General; **Nasir Shaikh**, Sports Committee Chairman and General Manager at The Westin to name a few.





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Fire Marshal's training in Mumbai

On the back of the great success of its first Fire Marshals Training programme held on March 11, 2019, HRAWI conducted one more batch of the programme for hotels and restaurants in the city. The training activity was held on April 8, 2019, at the Mumbai Fire Brigade headquarters in Byculla, and was conducted under the supervision of the Mumbai Fire Chief and Director of Directorate of Maharashtra Fire Services, **Dr Prabhat Rahangdale** and his team. Through the seminar, a fresh batch of 118 employees from several hotels and restaurants across the city received training on the different aspects of fire safety.





Promoting it right

HRAWI organised a seminar on 'Sales & Marketing Practices for Hotels & Restaurants' on April 23, 2019, at Hotel Marine Plaza, Mumbai. To address the participants, the association had invited two prominent speakers. One of them, **Karan Godhwani**, the Director of Sales & Marketing at Vivanta by Taj President Mumbai, has been actively associated with

the industry for approximately two decades and was also associated with Starwood and the Leela Group of Hotels. The other speaker, **Rohan Mehta**, CEO, Social Kinnect, Mumbai, established Social Kinnect from scratch, and in a span of seven years has grown it to one of India's largest independent digital agencies. He shared crucial insights on digital marketing.



Lords scouts for mid-segment hotels

With focus on the mid-scale segment, Lords Hotels & Resorts is now looking for branding and operating opportunities for hotels owned by independent and first-generation hoteliers, anywhere in India.

Hazel Jain

In an effort to bring in more standardisation and use its expertise in the field, Lords Hotels & Resorts is looking for hotel properties across India for branding purposes.

Sharing this is **PR Bansal**, COO, Lords Hotels & Resorts, who says, "Our focus right now is to tap the mid-segment hotels in India, especially the first-generation and independent hoteliers who are not attuned to the current market scenario and its demands. We want to bring in our brand and show them how a good brand can increase their Gross Operating Profit (GOP) and put them on the map by

bringing in a new level of expertise and professionalism."

He explains that independent hoteliers sometimes are not aware of industry norms, rates and how to bring in operational efficiencies, and this is where a brand like Lords Hotels & Resorts can come in. "This will not only increase their profits but also streamline their processes. Of course, we are not restricting ourselves to them, but they are more important in the entire scheme of things that we want to focus on," Bansal adds.

He gives an example of how Lords can bring in more efficiencies even without the owner being present, with

the 118-key hotel in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, that it signed recently. "Since we are an Indian brand, we understand the market dynamics and the requirements better than an international brand. We will sign up any property, anywhere in India as long as it is in the mid-segment – the real mid-segment, not luxury not a guest house – in the \$50 range. Our expertise lie in affordability, but at the same time in giving true-value hotels," he says.

Bansal goes on to explain that while Lords-branded hotels are in the mid-segment, they are the best in that city. Lords is now preparing to open a world-class club in Rajkot.



PR Bansal



Room supply to grow 4%, demand by 7%

If the recent HVS ANAROCK study is to be believed, this is going to be a good year for the hotel industry. Its report titled 'India Hospitality Industry Review' says that the supply of rooms is anticipated to grow by four per cent and demand by seven per cent in 2019.

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Over the last two years, hotel supply grew by 3.7 per cent in 2017 and 3.5 per cent in 2018, whilst demand grew by 7 per cent and 6.8 per cent in the respective years. While both the past years have paved the way for strong growth in demand for 2019 driven by strong economic growth in the country, some headwinds in 2019 are expect-

ed to dampen the performance turnout for the year.

The first major reason is the country's general election, during which the commercial market, the mainstay for hotels in the country, puts on hold all decision making in anticipation of the election results that could potentially have a material impact on several policy initiatives of the government. Thankfully though, elections will be held in the Summer

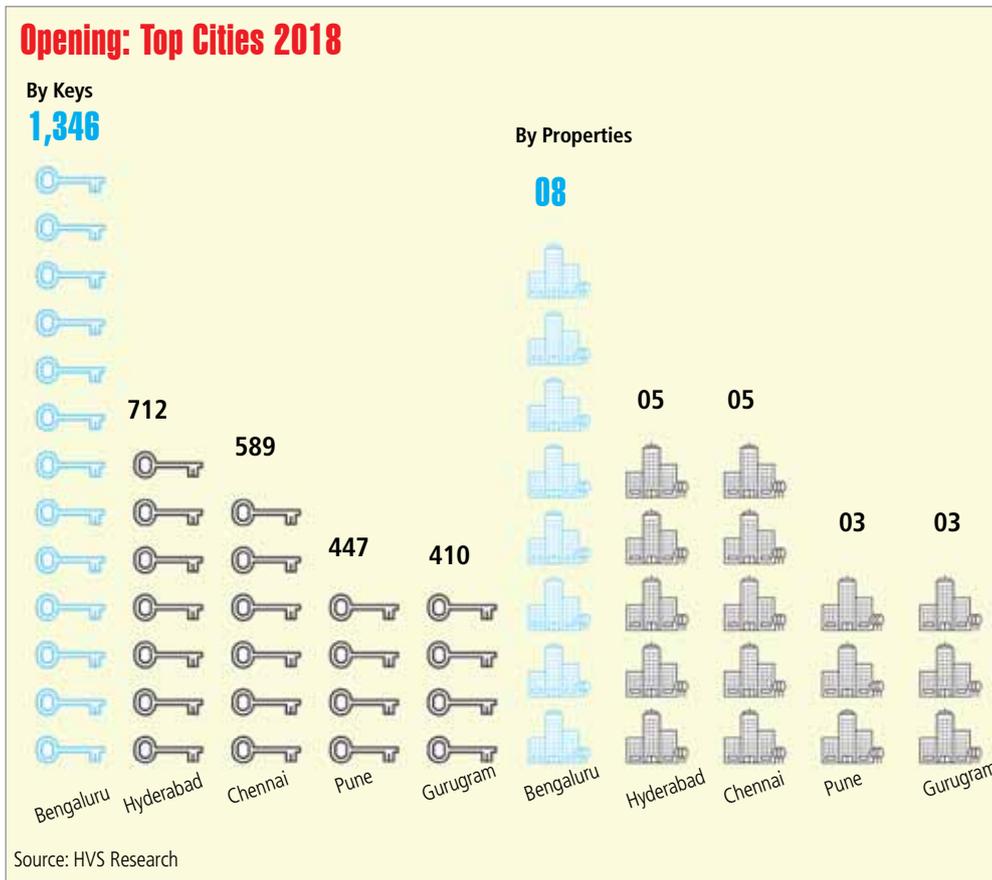
months when demand in the country is comparatively low, limiting its negative impact on hotel performance. The second major reason is the impact of new hotel supply that is expected to commence operations in the current year. As per estimates, 8,574 keys will enter the market in 2019, a nearly 19 per cent rise over the last two years.

One-third of new hotel signings in India emerge from Tier-III markets

Rapid urbanisation in India is increasingly making Tier-III markets more relevant in the eyes of hotel brands, according to the report. Nearly a third of new hotel signings emerge from these markets despite hotels being much smaller than those located in Tier-I

India-wide predictions for 2019

- ❖ RevPAR should grow by 9.5%, largely on the back of growth in Average Daily Rates (ADR).
- ❖ GOP margins are likely to improve by 8%.
- ❖ Supply is anticipated to grow by 4% and demand by 7%.
- ❖ Estimated volume of hotel transactions is pegged at circa \$800 mn.



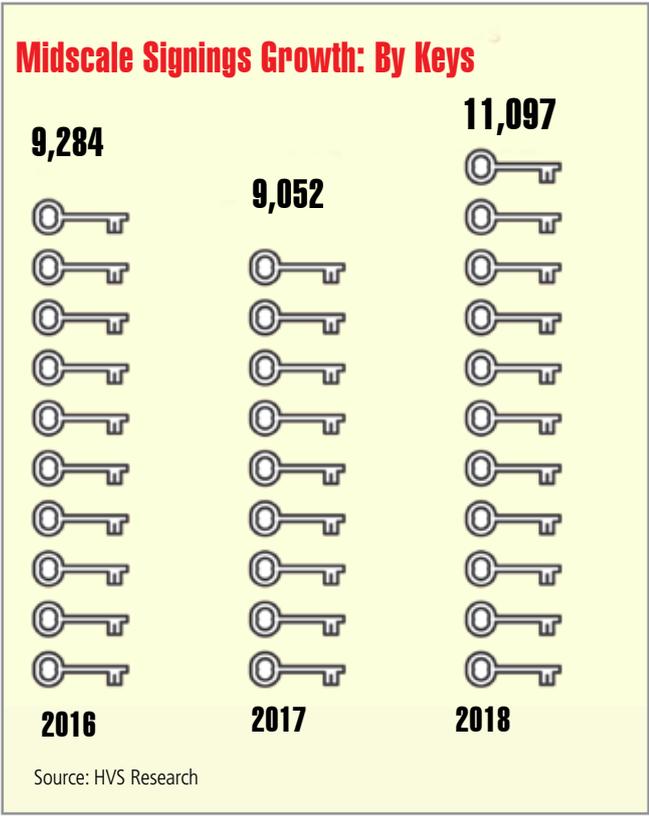
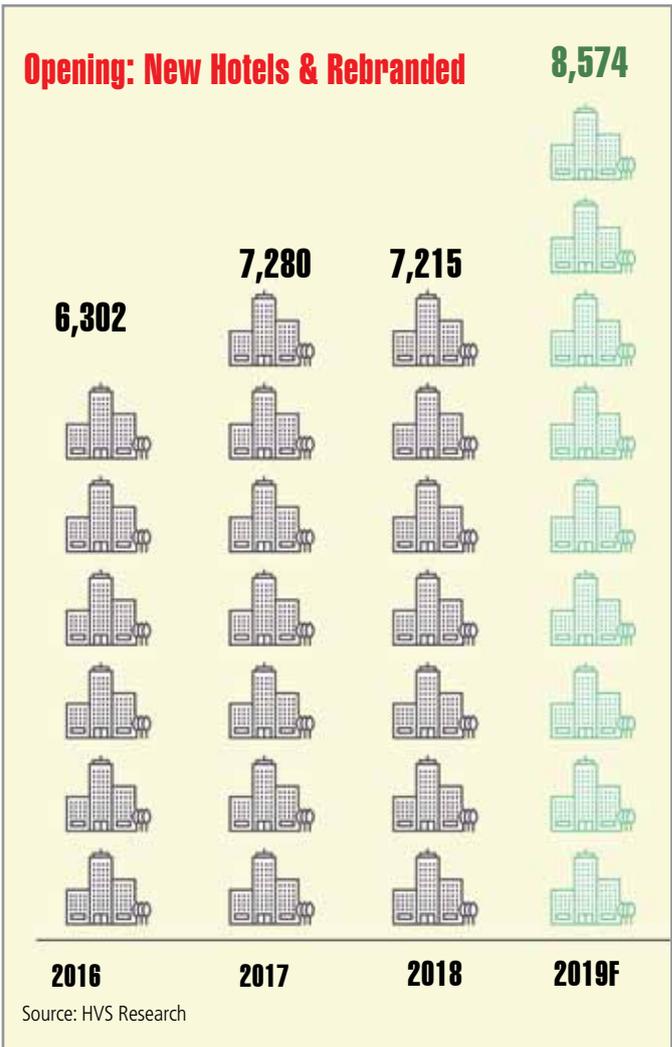
markets. This is also happening on account of newer hotel management companies setting shop as also the smaller ones looking to grow rapidly through franchise or management agreements of smaller stand-alone hotels in Tier-II and III cities.

Looking ahead

The year 2019 is expected to be a tricky one, especially since 2018 has seen growth in performance over 2017 in almost all major markets across India, with the momentum carrying into the first quarter of 2019, where performance of January and February 2019 is a stellar 11 per cent higher in RevPAR performance than the same period last year. The tricky part, though, is the impact of elections on the industry combined with a strong growth in hotel supply in the year. Given the head-start that 2019 has received coupled with the general momentum that has built over the last two years, RevPARs are expected to grow.

It is evident that the majority domestic hotel companies have developed a niche for themselves by targeting hotel owning clients who are often missed out by international and a few domestic operators such as Oberoi, Taj and ITC, as they offer hotel branding options with small inventory sizes. Domestic hotel operators should watch out for new-age companies like OYO, Treebo and FabHotels, who are aggressively growing in a space that is largely ignored by others, and which is quickly placing them in a position to target the midscale clientele of domestic hotel operators.

It was heartening to see an increase of hotel brand signings in leisure markets, especially since majority of the hotel demand in the country today is commercial in nature, while the domestic travellers fret to find good quality leisure getaways. Leisure destinations allow for a certain level of hedging risks emanating from being too commercial demand-focused. It is believed



that leisure markets will continue to see higher levels of interest from hotel investors and operators, albeit with smaller room inventories.

The transactions segment is expected to resume strongly in 2019 on the back of a few transactions slated to consummate before elections this year, setting a record for the industry.

The listing of the first REIT by Embassy and Blackstone will also be very closely watched as the bucket of assets of the REIT contain hotel assets. A good listing could propel other players to follow suit and lead to the acquisition/merger of hotel portfolios to be part of the REIT listing.



Phaltan's green spot

Jakson Inns Phaltan, located in a town in the Satara district of Maharashtra, is doing its bit towards protecting the environment.

Sandeep Talaulikar, Owner, Jakson Inns Phaltan, says that though the initial cost of investment may have been high, it is still no hindrance to the efficiencies this move would bring in the future.

Hazel Jain

There are big lessons to be learnt from this small property located in Phaltan, which crosses a drought-prone area in Satara. It was conceptualised keeping in mind the various green systems that could be – and in some instances, must be – put in place. **Sandeep Talaulikar**, Owner, Jakson Inns Phaltan, knew that while the initial investment was high, these systems would bring in operational efficiencies while protecting the immediate environment. The state policies, however, did not make it

easy for him. He says, "Different states have different policies. What Maharashtra and the entire India need is an open solar policy like that of Karnataka."

Karnataka's policy not only allows a business to buy smaller amounts of solar energy, it also doesn't charge for transporting the units. A business can buy from solar farms or from the government and avail a 10-year relief on tax. In stark contrast, he says that for some reason, in Maharashtra – one of the most important states in India

– a business is charged for using solar energy. Also, one cannot buy small amounts. "You cannot buy less than 1 MW, which is something you will need for two ITC Grand Marathas. So, it's impossible for three-star, two-star, and one-star properties to buy solar power. Also, there is no tax benefit. It is no wonder why not many hotels are opting for solar power in this state," Talaulikar adds.

On its part, Jakson Inns Phaltan is trying to influence the policy makers. Due to lack of space, it becomes very difficult for hotels



Sandeep Talaulikar



to opt for solar panels or do water harvesting, or set up a Sewage Treatment Plant (STP).

Fortunately, the property has one. Talaulikar says, "There are some tax benefits to an STP in some municipalities in Maharashtra. So, people put it up but don't operate it until the inspector comes. There is an operative cost. However, if you feel responsible towards the earth, then you should operate it. There is also a taboo on it."

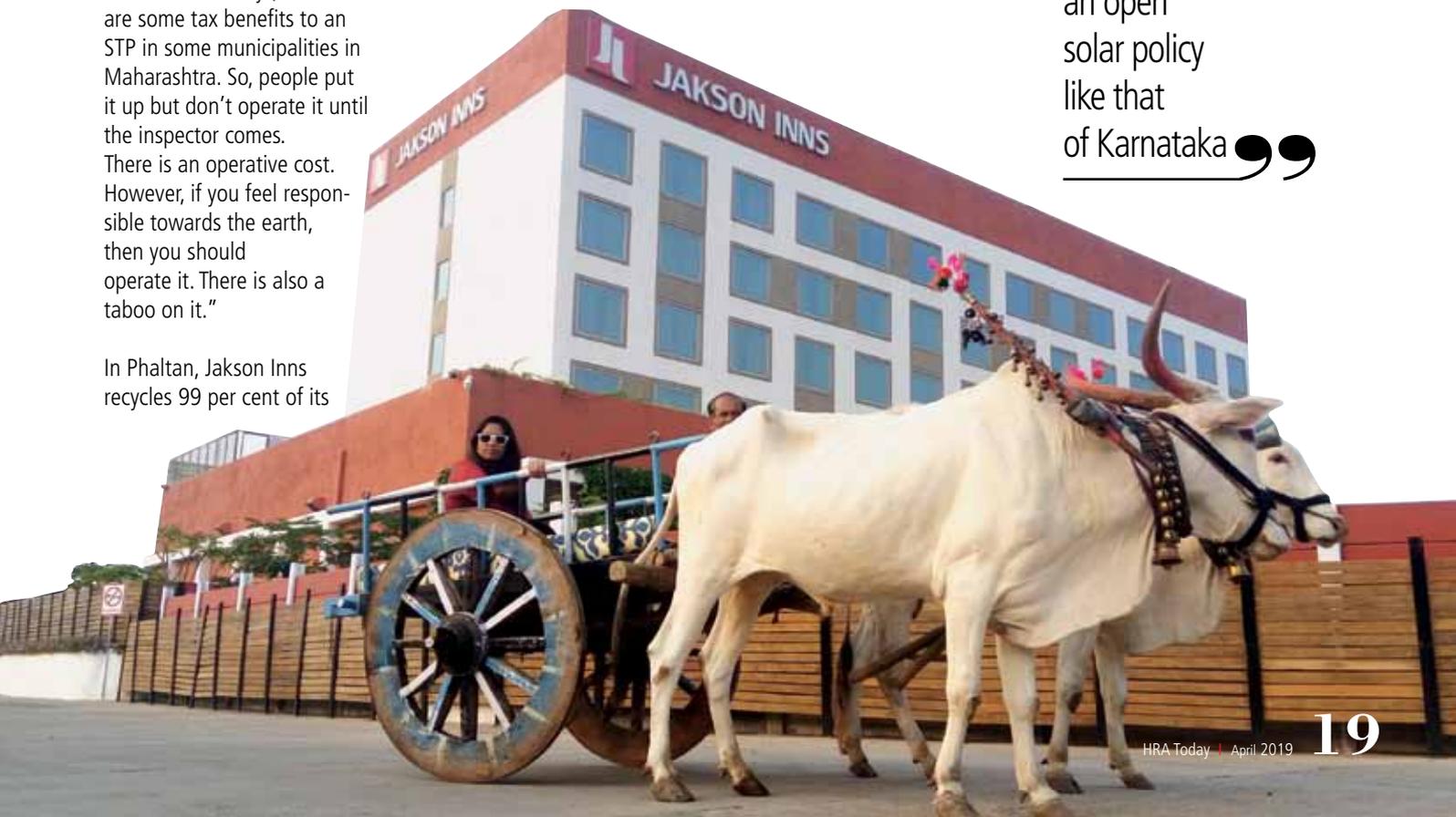
In Phaltan, Jakson Inns recycles 99 per cent of its

water through its STP, but telling the guest about the source is a problem and so, the hotel uses it for flushing, irrigation, and rainwater harvesting. It has

one STP, one rainwater harvesting tank, and a solar plant. The only thing it does not have is bio gas, which will be set up soon for the kitchen. But since bio gas does not come with a huge force, its usage is limited.

"We prioritised our green efforts. We put five per cent of ₹45 crore capex into being green, so about ₹5 crore at the hotel planning stage and we did it in phases. We opened with these three things – rainwater harvesting, STP, and solar panels. Over time, we added a few things and today, we are just about 110 KW short of being a net-zero off the grid," he adds.

“
What Maharashtra and the entire India need is an open solar policy like that of Karnataka”





IHG and SAMHI's winning alliance

Rajit Sukumaran, Chief Development Officer, EMEA, InterContinental Hotels Group, talks about the company's successful partnership with SAMHI to re-launch its Holiday Inn Express brand in India.

Hazel Jain

Fourteen hotels at one go! How have you managed to reach this target?

We had been trying to collaborate with SAMHI for some time and the opportunity presented itself in 2017. It was an interesting proposition! There were obviously some challenges but the key drivers that were working for us were great locations and a great partner. Some of them were existing hotels and they were operating under different brands. This partnership is probably the largest portfolio transaction of that nature for a hotel management company – to do 14 hotels and 2000 rooms in one go. We managed to pull it off and we not only managed to open them, but open them on a budget.

Are you looking at similar collaborations in India?

Yes, we are. In India, we have signed a record number of

deals in the last few years. In the last five years, IHG has grown by 160 per cent! We now have close to 40 operational hotels and another 40 under construction across India.

What segment would this be in?

Our growth driver is the Holiday Inn brand family, which accounts for probably 70-80 per cent of our growth in India. Almost 70 per cent of the hotels in the pipeline are under the Holiday Inn brand family and 80 per cent of the properties under construction are under this same family, which ties in well with our strategy.

Why do you have so much focus on the Holiday Inn brand family?

India is unique in the sense that it is largely a domestic play. So you want to be able to go to the market and cater to that domestic guest and not just look at international tour-

ists. That's why we recognised early on that our growth strategy should be from the Holiday Inn brand of family, which is in the mid and upper-midscale, and is perfect for the domestic market. It also allows you to have lower investment costs.

Does that mean IHG will not look at other brands for the India market?

Not at all. We currently have four brands present in India – InterContinental, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express, and we are in active talks to bring in more brands. There is no reason why other brands will not fit into India. It is just about finding the right partner at the right time.

We are also looking at bringing our Kimpton brand into India; it will resonate well here. We are also looking at opportunities in the extended-stay area in India for our StayBridge Suites brand.



Rajit Sukumaran

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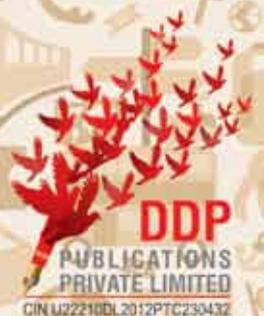
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Collaborations

The next big thing?

Across the globe, hotel companies are either acquiring other brands or merging with existing ones to gain greater visibility in the market and strengthen their presence. Some industry experts throw light on why this trend makes sense.



HRA Today Bureau

★ **Jean-Michel Cassé**
**Chief Operating Officer - India
and South Asia**
Accor

In terms of mergers and acquisitions, if there were any opportunity that made sense, we would look at it, but is that what we are running after now, no, because what

we really want is our development to clearly be asset-light. We are looking at mergers and acquisitions from a central or global point of view. This is why, thanks to the acquisition of Fairmont, Raffles and Swissotel, we've been getting additional hotels here. Thanks to the acquisition of Mövenpick, we've been getting additional inventory. So, globally, few other things like that may come and then they would be integrated and be supported by

our entire network, as is being done now. I have to say that the acquisition of Fairmont, Raffles, and Swissotel gave us an amazing visibility in the luxury space because now, Accor globally, is the second luxury player on earth after Marriott. When we look at the development pipeline, we have a slightly bigger pipeline than they do. So, we are doing well in that space and these hotels enable us to look forward to new developments or luxury hotels in India as well.

I don't think there is a flipside because if there is such a merger or acquisition, it means there is an interest for both parties, and there would be interest for both parties in light of what the customer's choice would be. Either you keep whatever you merge or whatever you acquire with the existing brand, or you rebrand it to any of your brands. We, in India, now grow clearly as being asset-light. This means that we don't need to do any additional investment.



★**Ajay Bakaya**
Managing Director
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts

The last two to three years have witnessed the trend of brand acquisitions and mergers in the hotel industry, globally. This translates to availability of more funds for a stronger distribution system and improved, catchy

loyalty programmes. We see the trend continuing for the next few years as well. In our case, the merger with Louvre Hotels Group (LHG) opened new doors in terms of global presence, distribution channels, loyalty programmes, and worldwide synergies with a large hotel group. There is absolutely no confusion

in the market or in the mind of the customer about brands. So far, the transition has been seamless and we have retained our home-grown brands, which have now been added to the overall product portfolio of Louvre Hotels Group. We are looking forward to exciting times and are very happy with this tie-up.

Mergers and acquisitions have provided our brands a global presence, in addition to providing access to various distribution channels and central reservation systems that have opened up the technology gates for us. They offer new-age technology to distribute hotel rooms across the globe in addition to our pan India presence.

Sarovar's loyalty programme will merge into LHG's programme and eventually, into Jin Jiang group's loyalty programme with over 120 million members. These developments will offer Sarovar rewards members a whole new world of benefits.



★**Vivek Bhalla**
Regional Vice President
South West Asia
InterContinental Hotels Group

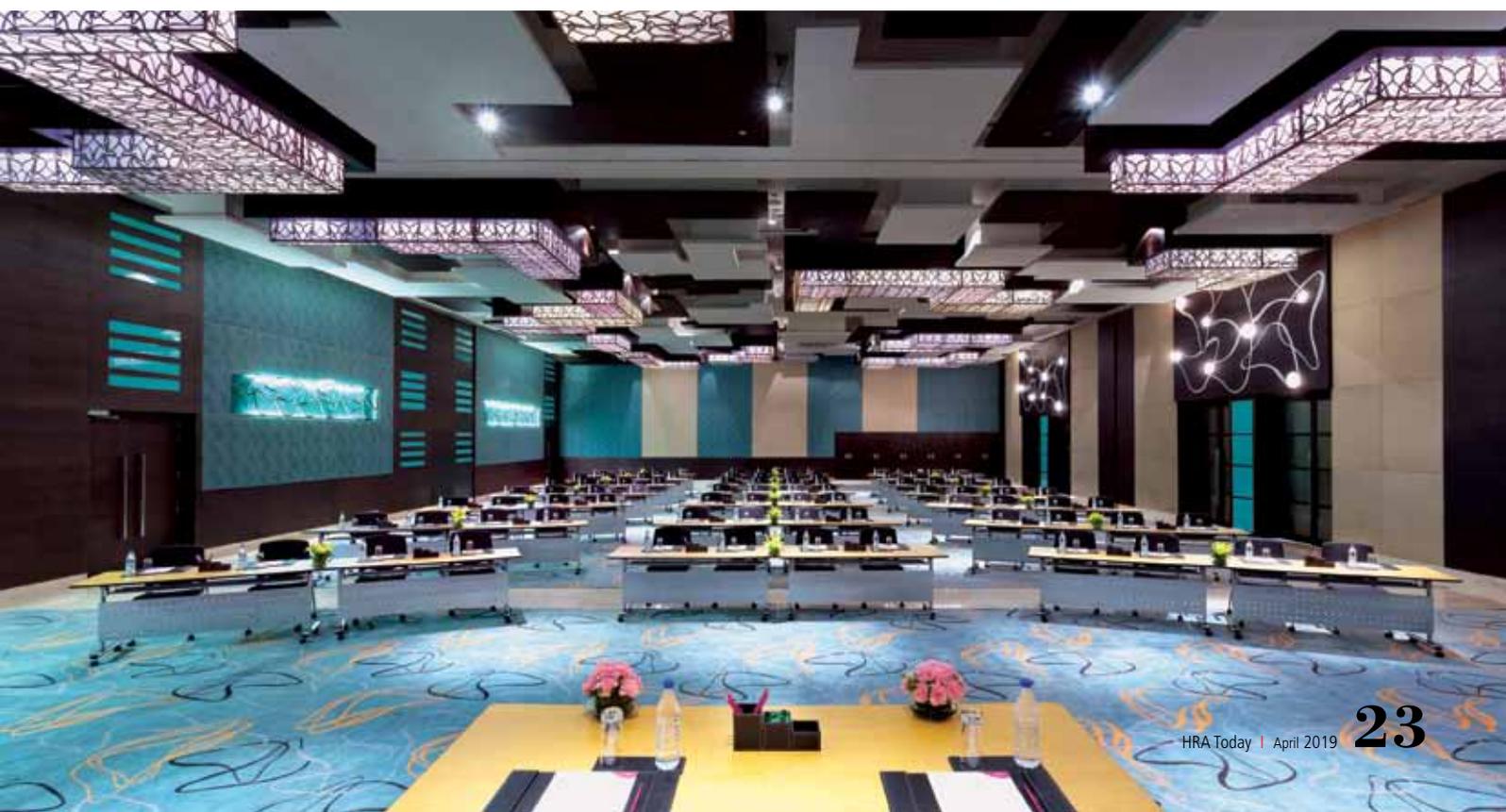
We have talked consistently about the opportunity to strengthen our brand portfolio in the highest opportunity segments, and we've done this by launching new brands as

well as adding them through mergers and acquisitions. In July 2018, we acquired 51 per cent stake of Regent Hotels and

Resorts, which has been an excellent addition to our portfolio and has strengthened our presence in the luxury segment. With this acquisition, we saw a real opportunity to round-out our global portfolio and add an upper luxury brand at a price point above InterContinental.

This addition has helped us enhance our owner and guest proposition by giving us the ability to fill a 'portfolio gap'.

It has also created a more robust loyalty offering and improved our ability to attract more B2B customers. Last year, we signed the first Regent Hotel post the acquisition in Kuala Lumpur, and with the right partners and right locations, we expect to have representation across regions.





Why cooking goes beyond ingredients

“We have lost touch with nature and with the farmer. It’s an era where we take what is being offered with no question to its origins whatsoever,” says **Michael Swamy**, a chef and food media specialist, as he talks about the significance of the way food is cooked.

When we travel, we eat; when we eat, we travel! Food is the epicentre of our moods, our emotions, and our memories. Journeying into the wild is all about understanding nature and its custodians, large or small. It’s not just about cooking and eating, but about understanding local cuisine.

So, what really is food sustainability and lifestyle sustainability? Our industrialised diet of refined flour, poor-quality fats, and an unbelievable amount of sugar has set the stage for diabetes and obesity to thrive. Our very notion of life is threatened by climate change and what others thrust on us.

Food is not just about recipes but about the geographic nature of an ingredient. We have lost touch with nature

Swamy on Cooking Wild

Cooking Wild is an experience that takes guests on a magical journey of food and wildlife. The search for exotic wildlife is coupled with luxury and fine-dining, a curated menu of local cuisine, crafted Anglo-Indian cuisine, high teas, and culinary workshops. Guests can learn the art of pottery, visit the local markets, and enjoy forest walks where they can experience the circle of life. For this, he works with resorts like Te Aroha in Dhanachuli in the Himalayan range, Pugdundee Wildlife Resorts in MP, and Waxpol in Doars and West Bengal.

and with the farmer. The lack of change in farming practices has denuded the earth. What we think of as organic isn’t really organic. Pesticide levels have resulted in diseases like Alzheimer’s and dementia. Modern times have changed the nature of how we cook and what we cook in. There is a change coming in what we eat and drink; should it be full of chemicals and pesticides is the question. We need to ask questions

and also help the farmer. One good aspect that is happening is that chefs are turning farmers in their hotels, growing food and vegetables; urban farming is on the rise.

For sustainability to happen, we have to take ownership of our food and what we are doing to the planet.

(Views expressed are the author’s own. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same).



Michael Swamy

Radisson adds brands in India

Having taken over the new leadership position at one of the top hotel groups worldwide just four months ago, **Zubin Saxena**, MD and VP Operations, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, is already steering the team to launch its sixth brand in India.

Hazel Jain

Having been with the hotel group since February 2018, **Zubin Saxena**, Managing Director and Vice President Operations, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, was appointed in his new role only in December 2018. He is fortunate to be at this position at

such an interesting juncture for the group and he voices it. "We are excited about Radisson Red Mohali, which is our new lifestyle, select-service brand. We are looking to launch it in the next 12 months. This will be the first Radisson Red in the Asia Pacific region and in India. We have also recently signed a 350-room Radisson Red in Noida," he says.

Close on its heels is another brand of Radisson that is getting ready to announce its debut in India – Radisson Collection, which is in the luxury space above Radisson Blu.

"We are actively in discussions for various sites in India for this. We would love to have the Radisson Collection brand as a palace in Rajasthan, or a high-end resort in Goa, or

even a city hotel in Bengaluru with a large convention centre. Once we have the right location and partner for this, we will announce it," Saxena reveals.

Focus on tiered cities

Radisson's focus on tiered cities will continue. Replying to a question as to which brand is performing well in India, Saxena says, "All five brands in India are doing well. We were 1.2 per cent above RevPAR in India. India is certainly growing in Tier-II and III locations, and almost 50 per cent of our pipeline is coming up in these locations. So, different segments are growing in different locations. Going forward, our focus will be on increasing our average rate growth through robust revenue management."

Initiatives

The group recently launched a new programme in South Asia, called 'Hotel Center of Excellence' – a workshop for General Managers in India. It involves 12 KPIs, which go all the way from top-line revenues and operating profitability to guest satisfaction surveys and enhanced technology platforms. The group is also rolling out seven new global brand programmes, including Rad Family, Radisson Meetings, and Welcome India.



Zubin Saxena





★ **Anil Chadha**
Vice President - Operations
ITC Hotels

Anil Chadha has been appointed Vice President – Operations at ITC Hotels, and will be based out of Delhi. He moves to this role from that of Vice President - South and General Manager, ITC Grand Chola, where he was responsible for growth and

expansion in the southern region in both the WelcomHotel and Luxury Collection brands. His exemplary leadership characterised by excellent people management and team-building skills drive the result-oriented, passionate, and ethical work culture that he inculcates.



★ **Sumit Shah**
General Manager, Sales and
Marketing
Indana Hotels

Indana Hotels has appointed Sumit Shah as the General Manager, Sales and Marketing. He brings with him a rich experience of more than 25 years in the hospitality industry.

Shah will spearhead the sales and marketing of both the Jodhpur and Jaipur hotels, based out of the corporate office in Mumbai. Prior to joining Indana Hotels, he was associated with Sarovar Hotels, Royal Gulf Tourism, The HHI, Fariyas Hotels, ITC Fortune Hotels, and Lemon Tree Hotels among others.



★ **Stephen D'Souza**
General Manager
Four Points by Sheraton Navi
Mumbai, Vashi

Stephen D'Souza has been appointed General Manager at Four Points by Sheraton Navi Mumbai, Vashi, which celebrates its tenth-year commemoration in June this year. D'Souza has been

working in the hospitality business for more than 18 years, collaborating with properties under brands like The Oberoi Hotels, Marriott International, and the InterContinental Hotels Group. His passion for F&B operations has helped him bolster the opening of hotels over the years.



★ **Sharad K Upadhyay**
General Manager
Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport

Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport has appointed Sharad K Upadhyay as General Manager. Upadhyay comes with over 20 years of experience across a broad spectrum of hospitality functions, and holds specialisation in hotel

operations with an avid interest in food and beverage as well as in sales and marketing. In the new role, he will spearhead the business operations, overall implementation and business development at Holiday Inn Mumbai, ensuring its growth and expansion through innovative strategies.





★**Abhay Singh**
Director of Operations
The Westin Pune Koregaon Park

Abhay Singh has been appointed as Director of Operations at The Westin Pune Koregaon Park. An industry expert, he holds an experience of more than 10 years converting strategic vision into measurable results at various hotels. As the Director of

Operations, Singh will be responsible for heading and managing hotel operations and maintaining high standards of guest satisfaction. Prior to joining The Westin Pune, he served as the Director of Food & Beverage at The Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa and Langkawi International Convention Center. Singh began his career as an F&B executive with Renaissance Mumbai and has now worked with Marriott across various luxury properties.



★**Sharad Singh**
Director of F&B
Sheraton Grand Pune

Sheraton Grand Pune has appointed Sharad Singh as Director of Food & Beverage. An industry veteran, Singh brings with him more than a decade of experience in the hospitality industry. In the new role, he will be managing the overall operations of the food and beverage department

and will focus on introducing innovative F&B concepts. He will be leading the team, training them to uphold premium guest services. Equipped with a diploma in hotel management and catering technology from Naval Institute of Technology, Mumbai, he began his journey in the F&B space with Renaissance Mumbai. Prior to his current appointment with Sheraton Grand Pune, he was Food & Beverage Manager at The St. Regis Mumbai.

★**Xenia Jamshÿd Lam**
Food & Beverage Manager
Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa, Goa

Xenia Jamshÿd Lam has been appointed as the F&B Manager at Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa, Goa. In her new assignment, she will be responsible for supervising and directing the daily food and beverage operations at the property. While working closely with chefs to create new and exciting menus and implement cost-cutting strategies, Lam hopes to raise the bar for fine-dining even further. Equipped with a bachelor's degree in hotel management from IHM Aurangabad and one in business administration from Marathwada University, Aurangabad, Lam went on to complete her Masters in Gastronomy from the University of Gastronomic Sciences Pollenzo.



★**Amit Kumar Dash**
Executive Chef
The Westin Pune Koregaon Park

The Westin Pune Koregaon Park has appointed Amit Kumar Dash as Executive Chef. With over 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Dash is well-appointed to handle kitchen operations and achieve guest satisfaction as well as team management. At The Westin, he will be responsible for planning of order and execution of all daily operations, supervising junior associates in maintenance and cleanliness while ensuring minimum wastage and controlling food cost. He will also be responsible for overlooking F&B activities of the restaurants, and handling banqueting operations. Prior to the new role, Dash was the Executive Chef at Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel.





A cut above the rest!

Munix brings to the industry its range of chef knives that are perfect for chopping, slicing, dicing, and mincing. One of the most versatile knives available in the market, they have a conically ground, full-length, and crosswise blade for precise cutting. The ergonomic design gives greater control and is perfectly suited for the chef's hand. With a hygienic food grade polypropylene handle, these dishwasher-safe knives also have a laser-tested cutting-edge angle which needs 40 per cent less initial cutting force. The Munix portfolio largely comprises knives, peelers and scissors, as well as a professional range for HoReCa customers. Each product meets international design standards and passes through stringent quality tests to aid efficiency and productivity of users.

Munch on, guilt-free!

Keeping pace with the trend of healthy snacking, Cornitos has developed an innovative product - Mélange Veggie Nacho Crisps, made from natural vegetable extracts blended with corn masa and seasoned with Himalayan pink salt and roast garlic. The 70g pack is a mix of beetroot nachos, spinach nachos, and white bean nachos in a single pack. Each vegetable blended with corn masa gives a special colour, flavour, and health benefit to the crisps. While beetroot is a good source of vitamin C, white beans are rich in antioxidants and protein, and spinach is loaded with vitamins A and E. The crisps are wedge-shaped, extra thin, gluten-free, and cooked in healthy corn oil.



The cool side of a Qube

Godrej Appliances has launched Qube, a compact F&B cooler powered by an advanced solid-state electronic cooling green technology that cools and does not freeze. Godrej is the first brand to launch this revolutionary environmentally friendly technology for the Indian market. While all traditional cooling devices continue to rely on refrigerant-based cooling, the new Qube is refrigerant-free, compressor-free, and works instead on a thermo-electric chip. Available in two colours, metallic grey and black, Godrej Qube is a zero-frost product which means that there will be no hassles of defrosting. It comes with multiple features like LED-lit interiors, stabilizer-free



operation, magnetic auto door closure system, easy maintenance and service, and delivers best-in-class performance and convenience to users.

Coffee made better

Lavazza, the Italian coffee brand, has launched its Lavazza Blue range of coffee machines which include Classy Milk, Classy Compact, and Classy Mini types. The one-touch machines equipped with Bluetooth technology use Lavazza Blue capsules that guarantee in-the-cup excellence and maintain consistent coffee quality and freshness. The Classy Milk coffee machine comes with a touch interface allowing three different coffee selections and three milk-based recipes. Classy Compact is Lavazza's latest innovation in the world of espresso coffee. With its modern and compact design, it is perfect for small spaces. Classy Mini is the smallest machine in the range and comes with the options of 'automatic' and 'programmable'. The range reflects Lavazza's philosophy of elegance, sophistication and innovation, all blended together.



Perfectly imperfect

IOTA Boutique Furniture introduces the Ume chair designed by Maja Ganszyniec, who has followed the Japanese notion of wabi-sabi or 'the acceptance of imperfection' in exploring the ideas of geometry and asymmetry. The Ume series includes an armchair and a sofa. The irregular running outline of the sphere, transforming its geometry, reveals technological and constructive virtuosity. Examination of the angularity results in a surprisingly soft shape and an ergonomic, comfortable seat. Two waves of the fabric folded on the backrest display an honest approach to textile upholstery, one which covers a complex and sophisticated form. The asymmetrical shape creates an illusion, while parts of the solid structure smoothly turn into angles. The folded textile, and the way it's laid on the furniture, becomes the integral part of the form, giving it definition and providing a final touch to its geometry.



Flow smart, save smart

VitrA has introduced its stylish water-saving faucets named T4. A totally new approach to the natural flow of water with its pure design and functionality, the T4 faucet adds panache to washbasins. Made with auto-clean silicon aerator, the faucets from VitrA provide a smooth flow while saving water. The built-in basin mixer with a cascade flow beautifully complements the bowls. Smooth, contoured and attractive, the mixer is designed to save water and electricity. Refined and restful, VitrA's new T4 faucet is minimalist in style but maximalist in function.

All a-board!

RMD Boards, introduced by Ventura International in the Indian market, offers trendy wall panelling solutions to make interiors look more elegant, inviting, stylish, and sophisticated. RMD wall panels can easily and quickly be installed without the need for base preparation. The new collection boasts of natural-looking marble, granite, wood, or leather. The range is waterproof, termite-proof, and available in full sizes of 8'x4' and is very light to work with. The panels are also eco-friendly, stain and scratch-resistant, sound and thermal-proof, recyclable, and easy to maintain. As a next-generation material engineered for interior decoration, RMD wall panels are an easy substitute of wood, MDF (medium-density fibreboard), plywood, paint, wallpaper, granite, and marble.



The syrup of happiness

Cremica is all set to enter the bar syrup category in association with Maison Routin of France with the launch of 'Bonheur', a specialised range of syrups. Known for its innovative offerings and commitment to quality, Cremica has unveiled nine new flavours of mayonnaise, which are a combination of both classic Indian and international flavours. For the health conscious, Cremica has an exclusive offering in the form of Sugarlite salad dressing, which comes in 14 different flavours and is low on the glycaemic index, contains healthy sugars, and has an omega balance.



JOHN SPENCE
Founder & Chairman | Karma Group

I thoroughly enjoy travelling. Even if I am not travelling for business, I am travelling for leisure. Maldives is my favourite holiday destination, given its relative remoteness. I also love the Greek islands. I first went there when I was 18, and used to sleep on the beach

and live pretty rough. Today, I don't have to do that because I have hotels and assets there. How things change! I like simplicity, the sea, food, and a relaxing environment with good friends, good conversations, and lots of sunshine. I also like sports and am very heavily involved with rugby.

“ I like sports and am very heavily involved with rugby ”

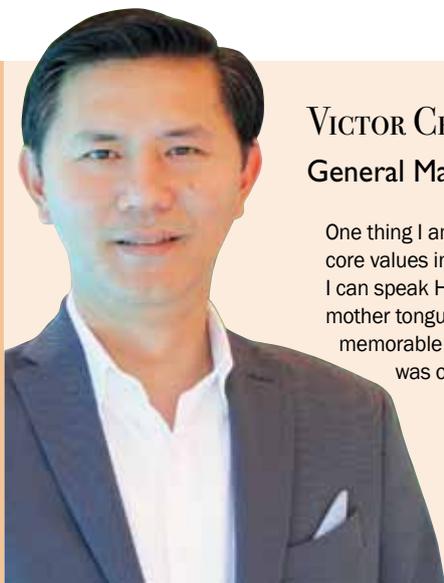
SID SAVKUR
Chief Executive Officer | Realm Hospitality

I enjoy trying new cuisines and restaurants and, of late, Netflix! One amazing holiday moment was on a trip to Moscow when my Airbnb host took me out for a pub crawl and to sample some restaurants that he frequented. It was a wonderful experience to see Moscow through the eyes of a

local. My favourite holiday destinations are Goa and Bhutan, and now I call both of them home. As far as food goes, variety truly is the spice of life for me, but I am partial to a good *biryani*. If I were a spice, I would be cinnamon, because it is versatile and goes well with both sweet and spicy dishes.



“ Variety is the spice of life for me, but I am partial to a good biryani ”



VICTOR CHEN
General Manager | Le Meridien Goa, Calangute

One thing I am most passionate about are my core values in life. Not many people know that I can speak Hindi and Bengali better than my mother tongue Cantonese. One of my most memorable holiday moments was when I was on top of Europe – Jungfrauoch in

Switzerland. My favourite holiday destination in India is Leh and the destination I absolutely love visiting abroad is Istanbul. My favourite cuisine continues to be Chinese. If I were a spice, I would be turmeric, because it gives its colour to any dish and has healing powers.

“ I can speak Hindi and Bengali better than my mother tongue Cantonese ”



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