

# HRA Today



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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION (WESTERN INDIA)

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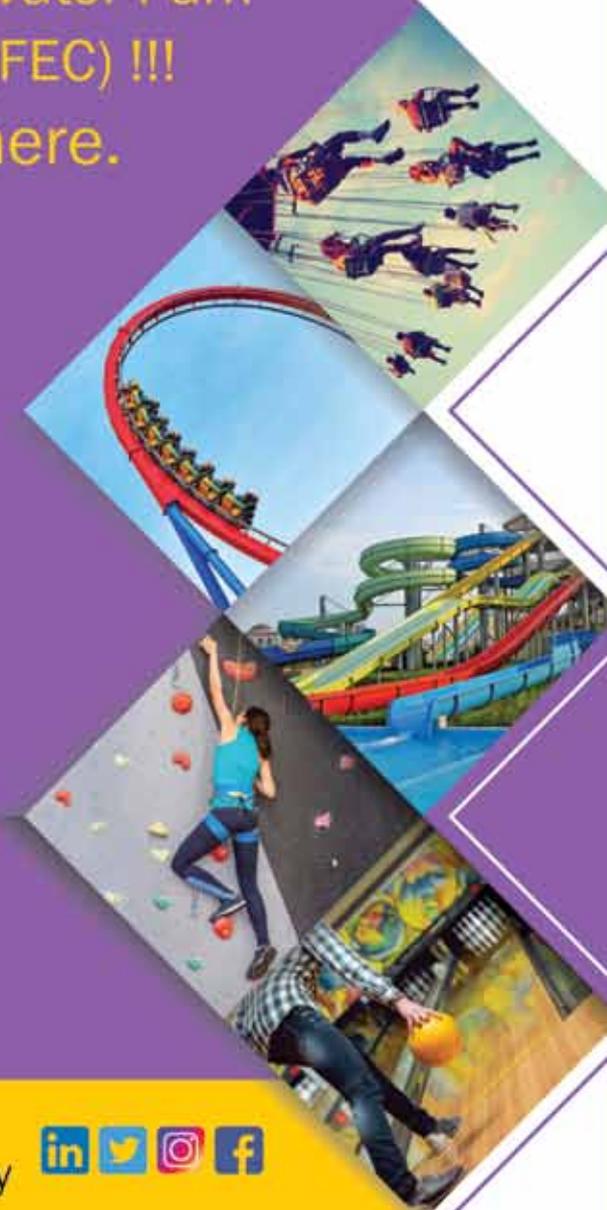
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## My Dear Members,

There is some good news for hoteliers. The latest ICRA report states that the Indian hotel industry is slated to grow at the rate of 9-10 per cent over the next four years. The Indian hotel industry witnessed its highest-ever occupancy in the last decade in FY2018 with a RevPAR increase of 17 per cent. The 10-year low was witnessed in FY2014. Though these figures are encouraging, the industry has been going through a dark period.

Our interaction with OTAs and aggregators (namely MMT-Goibibo and OYO Rooms) continues through our parent body, FHRAI. We have put the OTAs on notice based on various issues brought to our attention by member and non-member hotels and various individual state and city associations. Predatory pricing, exorbitant commissions being charged, hosting of illegal and unlicensed B&B accommodations, discretionary positioning and self rating, service charges being charged, burden of loyalty points and discounts, over discounting, ridiculously high commissions from 12-40 per cent, etc., are some of the points against which we have taken a stand with FHRAI. Unfortunately, the levy of the above rampantly continues, due to which the margins have been greatly reduced, especially in the budget segment. Due to this, input costs have become higher, mainly due to the high commissions of the OTAs. We are trying our best to come up with a solution that is feasible for all, as both parties need to co-exist but not at the cost of the other.

FHRAI has been getting unprecedented support from the entire spectrum of the hotel industry, be it non-member, individual hotels or smaller state and city-based associations, who have pledged solidarity with the parent body. We met representatives of the OTAs to try and come up with a mutual agreement, failing which we might have to take harsh steps to curb

the monopolistic tendency created by the menace of the OTAs, who would like to bargain individually with the hotels and create a divide amongst the fraternity. I hope to succeed in arriving at a solution agreeable to all, soon, and require your support during this trying period.

Meanwhile, you will be proud to know that HRAWI holds the record of training and certifying the highest number of industry professionals under FSSAI's FOSTAC programme – over 1,100 and counting. Such programmes are being held and vigorously attended in all the states and cities covered by HRAWI.

I recently attended a safety conclave as a panel speaker in Mumbai held by the IMC Mumbai, with **SK Jaiswal**; the Commissioner of Police, Mumbai, as the chief guest; and other panellists such as Neela Lad, RD, India Tourism, Mumbai; Karan Anand from Cox & Kings; Sushil Bhatt, CEO, Forvol Intl; and SPS Ahuja, Hony. Consul General, Georgia, among others. Safe tourism was stressed by the Commissioner and we highlighted how illegal accommodations, encouraged by OTAs, are actually a huge safety risk. We also met with the MD of MTDC, Abhimanyu Kale, and discussed how MTDC and HRAWI could together promote tourism.

All in all, it was an eventful year. Our liaison with the government continues. Tourism looks to be finally getting the prominence it demands, hospitality being the key ingredient. I look forward to a bright and prosperous 2019 for the industry.

Warm wishes,

**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**

President, HRAWI  
president@hrawi.com

## FHRAI requests MoT's intervention in OTA dispute

The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has reached out to the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India, regarding the hotel industry's on-going dispute with Goibibo, MakeMyTrip (Go-MMT) and OYO Rooms, requesting its urgent intervention for redressal of hoteliers' grievances. After a month of failed attempts to amicably resolve issues with the Online Travel Aggregators (OTAs), the apex hospitality body has written to the Minister of State for Tourism, **KJ Alphons**, outlining the major issues of concern to the industry because of the unfair and arbitrary

business practices of the OTAs. A number of FHRAI's members are experiencing hardships due to the OTAs' business ethics.

The letter to the Ministry states that the hotel industry is going through a very challenging phase which is threatening the livelihood, business, investments and entrepreneurial initiative and spirits of the hospitality industry, and thereby eroding the viability of the sector. "The industry, especially the budget and mid-market hotel segment, is reeling under the adverse business tactics of the OTAs," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI and President, HRAWI.

## Now, Sikkim hotels boycott Go-MMT

The Sikkim Hotels & Restaurants Association (SHRA) recently convened a hoteliers' meeting in Gangtok during which it was unanimously agreed to not continue conducting business with Go-MMT until the concerns were addressed and resolved. Effective January 16, 2019, hotels in the state have indefinitely closed inventory to the OTAs and have decided to not honour any new bookings that might come through. During the meeting, SHRA member hotels have also decided to terminate their contracts with Go-MMT immediately.

"We are in solidarity with the country's apex hospitality

body, FHRAI, and also our regional body, HRAEI, in uniting against the OTAs' unfair and discriminatory business practices. We have made an official appeal to all our members to not honour Go-MMT bookings from January 16, and have requested them to terminate their contracts with the OTAs immediately. However, we will accommodate guests who have already been booked through Go-MMT even after the 16<sup>th</sup>. We do not want our guests to be harassed or inconvenienced, however, the guest will be requested to make payments directly to the hotel instead to the OTAs," says **Pema Lamta**, President, SHRA.

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## Kapil Chopra announces The Postcard Hotel

Hotelier **Kapil Chopra** recently launched his latest hospitality venture, The Postcard Hotel, a brand of unique, intimate luxury hotels in India and the world. The hotels are aimed at the leisure-seeking audience and will be found in destinations by the sea, the mountains, or jungles rich in wildlife. Transformative experiences and local community are at the heart of The Postcard Hotel's offerings.

Each hotel will offer unique experiences that are true to its surroundings, giving guests a sense of the neighbourhood and the destination in a way never seen before. The experience within the hotel, too, is in keeping with the times of conventional luxury hotels. This

means no set breakfast hours, no buffets, and no sugary welcome drinks. In its place will be authentic local experiences, from food to design, artisanal welcome cocktails, defining your own check-in and check-out hours, as well as immersions with the local community.

"What I wanted to do with The Postcard Hotel is make luxury hotels for the modern audience but bring back the romance and charm of sun-kissed holidays. We wanted it to be rich in its experience but also wanted it to be simple. We believe guests want to stay in a place where the hotel does the thinking for them, where they get the simple things right, yet offer fantastic spaces for them to relax,



**Kapil Chopra**

meet like-minded people, and experience local culture. This is why we handpick our locations and our hotels, so that guests have a different experience whether they are in Goa or overlooking the snow-clad Himalayas," said Chopra.

In an unprecedented move, The Postcard Hotel announced the opening of three luxury hotels on the launch day itself. The three hotels are spread across unique neighbourhoods in Goa.

The brand is committed to building and operating 50 hotels in the next five years. In the next 12 to 18 months, The Postcard Hotel will be present in seven more destinations across the country including Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Dhauladhar mountain range, Sikkim, Darjeeling, the Sundarbans, and Kanha.

As it starts its operations, the hotel company has ₹600 crore of assets under management, led by a group of carefully chosen hospitality talent.

## Hyatt Place Goa rebranded as Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa

Hyatt Hotels has announced the rebranding of Hyatt Place Goa/Candolim to Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa, marking the brand's second hotel in India. Situated in the heart of North Goa, Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa provides contemporary accommodations close to the city's beaches; shopping centres; culture, entertainment, nightlife and other local hotspots, making it easy for guests to explore. "The opening of Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa is our first step in introducing the Hyatt Centric experience to the vibrant state of Goa," said **Sunjae Sharma**, Vice President, Operations (India) at Hyatt. "Based in one of the most popular areas of the island, we are confident that Hyatt Centric

Candolim Goa will allow guests to discover all that Goa has to offer. The introduction of the Hyatt Centric brand displays yet another way for us to care for our guests, while offering them international hospitality and authentic experiences."

The hotel has 167 guest rooms including one suite, offering views of the garden, pool or hillside through large bay windows or balconies. Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa also offers 6,065 sqft (563 square metres) of meeting and event spaces, including Jade Vine, a ballroom with state-of-the-art facilities; Isle de Sol, a flexible meeting space; and Jardim, an outdoor banquet space that can be used for either business or social events.

## More members for HRAWI

The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) added new hotel and restaurant members in the month of December 2018.

### HOTELS

Hotel Krishna Park Nursery	Rajkot, Gujarat
The Park Calangute Goa	Calangute, Goa
Mind Space Hotels and Resorts	Pune, Maharashtra
Cocoon Service Hotel	Pune, Maharashtra
Hotel Grand Rio	Nashik, Maharashtra
Hotel Krishna Avtar	Mumbai, Maharashtra
Hotel Intercity International	Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh
Tendu Leaf Jungle Resort	Chandnagar, Madhya Pradesh

### RESTAURANTS

The Raj Banquets and Hotels	Ahmedabad, Gujarat
Wah Marathi	Pune, Maharashtra
Tamasha Restaurant	Mumbai, Maharashtra
Yoko Sizzlers	Mumbai, Maharashtra

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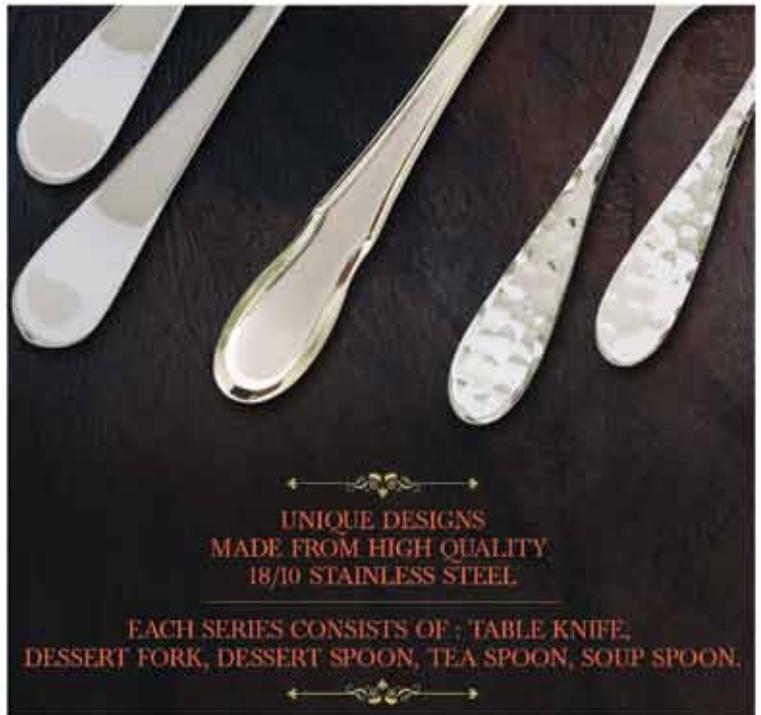
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## Lemon Tree Hotels opens second property in Pune

Lemon Tree Hotels has announced the opening of Lemon Tree Premier, City Center, Pune. This is its first Premier property in the state of Maharashtra and its second owned hotel in Pune city. A stylish atrium lobby, pop art, green vertical gardens, and a cascading wall fountain at the entrance add to its charm. The hotel offers 201 rooms and suites; a 24x7 multi-cuisine coffee shop, Citrus Café, complemented by a show kitchen; a recreation bar, Slounge; a pan-Asian restaurant, Republic of Noodles; as well as a spa Fresco, a Life Fitness gym, and an outdoor swimming pool.

The hotel also has over 7,000 sqft of banquet space, including large conference rooms and an open business centre for meetings and special events.

**Mahesh Aiyer**, Senior Vice President - Operations (South & West), Lemon Tree Hotels, said, "Pune has always been an important nerve centre of Indian culture and economy. With this hotel opening, we further strengthen our footprint in this demand-dense market. We expect to make a mark by offering a high-quality stay experience with our impeccable service and great price."

Lemon Tree operates three brands - Lemon Tree Premier (upper midscale), Lemon Tree Hotels (midscale), and Red



Fox Hotels (economy). With this opening it now owns and operates 52 hotels in 31 cities of India, aggregating 5300

rooms. Lemon Tree Hotel, Hinjawadi, Pune, launched in 2007, is the group's first hotel in the city.

## Mumbai's new culinary hotspot – Lilt opens doors

Set in Todi Mills, Lower Parel, Mumbai, Lilt is the brainchild of the sibling duo and entrepreneurs, Aaqil and Kamil Maredia, and specialises in Asian cuisines with an Indian twist. The place boasts of unique and original décor. The minimal furniture pieces, a rotating bar, raw undertones, and a limited colour palette lend diners a feel of being outdoors. Speaking about the launch, **Kamil Maredia**, Co-Founder, Lilt, said, "We are extremely thrilled to launch Lilt in Mumbai that marks our strategic entry into the heart of the city. We have always wanted to have a restaurant in Mumbai as we have such fond memories of going to school and growing up in this amazing city; it is an integral part of who we are. My love for all things Asian came about while I was living and working in Boston, where my



palettes truly missed relishing on the flavours of India. Having eaten in all the best restaurants in the USA and travelled extensively, the seed for Lilt was planted."

Lilt is a 7500 sqft high-energy dining space. The philosophy behind the restaurant is simple, to present Asian food and drink

with a twist. This is executed through a fine amalgam of cooking techniques such as mixology, which has been used throughout the menu. The fine-dining restaurant has on offer an array of traditionally cooked Asian dishes offered with an unusual rustic Indian twist with particular emphasis on flavour along with a selection

of beverages. As part of their starters menu, the restaurant offers an array of nibbles like Rustic Korean Dolman, Galina Balli, Xun Ji, Cha Ca Hanoi, Thai Tandoor Chilli Cottage Cheese and Kafire Lemon Basil Potato, while the main course comprises specialties like Salmon Jalapeno With Ponzu, Malay Lamb Pillaf, etc.

# Christmas evening at Renaissance Mumbai

A spectacular evening came to pass as the Marriott team celebrated a successful year of 'Harmony' at Renaissance Mumbai. The Marriott International team enjoyed a night of music and laughter at the dinner held at the Executive Lounge, as they raised a toast to the future. The evening was a culmination of all the events that have happened in Marriott Mumbai throughout 2018, which were hosted by various hotels and saw successful contribution from each. 'Harmony' defines a collective effort by six of Marriott's Mumbai properties, initiated to enrich associate



engagement and further strengthen the bonds that bind them together. The evening included live entertainment, which comprised the Mumbai-based band Fahrenheit, followed by a stand-up comedy act by Vinay Sharma, a graduate from IIT, Mumbai. The night concluded with inspirational words by **Anuraag Bhatnagar**, Multi-Property VP and GM at St. Regis Mumbai and **Neeraj Govil**, Area Vice President – South Asia at Marriott International.



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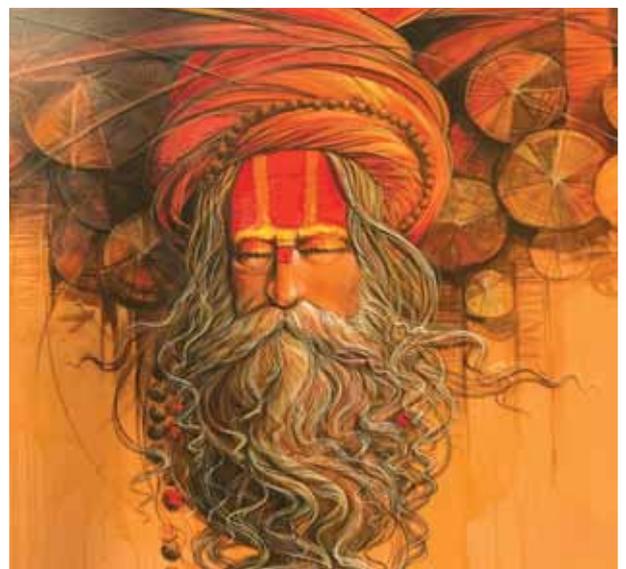
# Sofitel Mumbai hosts Christmas tea party

Sofitel Mumbai BKC recently hosted a Christmas Tea Party for underprivileged children from artist, philanthropist, and entrepreneur **Akshita Gandhi's** Dua Foundation, in keeping with the season's philosophy of spreading goodwill and celebrating the spirit of giving. Actress **Chitrangada Singh** joined in the festivities adding joy and cheer, and bringing smiles to the faces of her little fans.



# Shades of Asia at JW Marriott Pune

JW Marriott Hotel Pune recently partnered with the Asian Art House to display riveting art by over 15 acclaimed artists like **Manoj Das, Amit Bhar, Laxman Aaley, Bhaskar Rao Botcha, Sangeeta Babani,** and **Thota Laxminarayana** among others. They unveiled a new art series called 'Shades of Asia', a mélange of Indian and Vietnamese art. The unique exhibit had 20 superlative artworks.





# Mumbai experiments with Chef Marco Pierre White

Culinary festival 'World on A Plate' (WOAP) brought Britain's legendary celebrity chef **Marco Pierre White** to India for an interesting culinary debut this January. Taking place on January 19-20, this gourmand weekend witnessed White curating two exclusive fine-dine dinners and two highly-awaited masterclasses at The St. Regis Mumbai, followed by conversations over both days at Universal Square at High Street Phoenix, Lower Parel.

As part of the event, the chef also judged some of India's top restaurants that competed for the coveted 'World On A Plate Restaurant of the Year' trophy. After celebrating three successful seasons, this year's edition of WOAP saw national and international culinary chefs and connoisseurs like **Sarah Todd, Ranveer Brar, Jason James Hudanish, Ajay Chopra** and others grace the occasion. The festival started with the hearing-impaired students from Deeds Foundation using sign language to sing the national anthem. Then was the traditional unveiling of the World On A Plate, by White after which he showed his expertise in Indian cuisine, when he tried his hand at making a *dosa* (affectionately referred as Indian pancake).



# ‘15% commission is fair’

Sharing an update on the ongoing OTA issue, the HRAWI President, **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, says that the intention is to resolve it amicably and reach an agreement that is mutually beneficial and not at the cost of the other's survival.

Kanchan Nath

The Vice President of FHRAI and the President of HRAWI, **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, was recently in New Delhi to meet the heads of other regional associations and discuss the ongoing OTA issue. He said, “We had three or four major issues with the OTAs and the aggregators – predatory pricing, over-discounting, service charges, and high commissions. We are only asking them to review this and as an apex body of all hotels and restaurants, big, small and budget in India, spread over the four regions, we have requested them to come and

have a review meeting with us so that we can both be in a win-win situation. Right now, it is hurting the hotels and you can't survive if you're going to be giving out more than what you're earning. So, we requested them to come to the table and discuss things over on mutually agreeable terms.”

Meanwhile, the members are patiently waiting for a resolution. To this, he says, “Some of them may have taken individual decisions but at large more than 80

get hotels doesn't really work because deals then will not be struck at a standardised rate. We have stepped in only after the hotels have asked us to do so because they could not bargain or even get them on to the bargaining table earlier. We are now resolving this amicably and everything should be settled because that's what we want as well.”

Speaking about an 'ideal' rate that would be good for the industry, he says, “An ideal rate would be difficult to say

“

We cannot expect the OTAs to do business at the cost of their survival and vice versa, so it has to be a partnership where both of us can come together and sustain each other

”

per cent of the fraternity or maybe even more than that is with us. It doesn't work for the industry if you go and make individual deals or have a standardised formula like some OTAs have - they charge an 'x' amount of percentage whether you are big or small, and a 'y' amount if you want to be a preferred guest.”

As a final request, Kohli adds, “We are only requesting MakeMyTrip, Goibibo, as well as OYO to fall in line with this. Going and talking to individual owners and other smaller bud-

because they are charging anywhere between 12 to 40 per cent right now, mostly hovering around 30 per cent which is ridiculous! Some of them have come down to 15 per cent, which I think is fair. Anything below that would be even better. But while talking about fairness we have to also ensure that it's a situation where they can also survive. We cannot expect the OTAs to do business at the cost of their survival and vice versa, so it has to be a partnership where both of us can come together and sustain each other.”





# FHRAI reacts to MMT claim

FHRAI has never got involved in any negotiations with stand-alone vendors all these years, but takes a strong stand when the industry faces any outside intimidation, states **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI and President, HRAWI.

After MakeMyTrip (MMT) group's chief executive Deep Kalra's recent comment that the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has no locus standi to

President, FHRAI and President, HRAWI, says, "Goibibo and MMT have been exploitive, unethical and adapted divisive business practices, leading to predatory pricing, market

would be misconstrued as trying to "dictate" terms. India has approximately 100,000 establishments which provide accommodation. Approximately 65,000 are structured licensed establishments, out of which around 45,000 hotels are stand-alone hotels."

“

Go-MMT has been exploitive and unethical. I fail to see how our letter clearly worded as requesting to "resolve" the situation would be misconstrued as trying to "dictate" terms.”

determine commercial agreements between MMT and the establishments on its platform, **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice

distortions, and cannibalisation. I fail to see how our letter clearly worded as requesting to "resolve" the situation

He further added, "FHRAI has never got involved all these years in any negotiations with stand-alone vendors, but takes a strong stand when the industry faces any outside coercion or intimidation. It is only when thousands of hoteliers realised Goibibo and MMT's arrogant method of pressurising the small hotels into high commissions, more free rooms,



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**

and started price control on the owners. FHRAI has, in its fiduciary duty, stepped in to amicably resolve matters. Please note that FHRAI is not here to negotiate, as is wrongly being projected. It is here to ensure that agencies like MMT and Goibibo do not take the industry for granted by parent-ing such market conditions in

according to him. The larger question is, why are MMT and Goibibo scared to sit with FHRAI? Why can't the issues be resolved amicably – especially when he calls all the hotels his "partners"? The answers are obvious – divide and rule and continue to exploit the free-standing hotels, so that the foreign investors are pleased whilst crippling the small hotels in India. Goibibo and MMT are thriving on those stand-alone properties by taking away huge commissions, free rooms under the disguise of volume business and service charges from the person making the booking."

According to him, the two are demanding service charge from their clients, while hotel bookings are made on their website. Unusually, they have no standard policy for service charge, meaning every reservation made on their platform would charge a different percentage of service charge and in some chain hotel reservations, no service charge is demanded at all. Does it mean they are providing the so-called website service towards the stand-alone hotels, and for chain hotels no service is provided? They are fooling the consumer.

He also says, "Goibibo and MMT have been unethically promoting illegal hotels, illegal B&B on their platform to earn profits and commissions. We had pointed out in our letter to them which is available for all to see. We have only asked them to come to terms and resolve differences so that a level playing field is created for both and does not unduly favour any one party. How is that dictating terms? There has been no answer to our other issues. What are they doing to delist illegal accommodations? Swiggy and Scootsy had to delist 6,000

operators in one day after we pointed out similar conditions to the government. This is a huge security problem and I would like to know why Kalra is choosing to highlight only the commission part and not even touching this burning and grave issue. They should have the morals to promote 'Incredible India campaign' with the pledge of "Safe & Honourable Tourism" in India by providing safe accommodation. Is this too much to ask for?"

FHRAI is a 63-year-old apex body for the hospitality industry of India. FHRAI is the voice of the hospitality industry and provides an interface between the hospitality industry, policy makers, academics, international associations, and other stakeholders. FHRAI has asked to look at partners' contract as the one shown below:

- Standardised commissions 12-15 per cent instead of 30-40 per cent
- No discounting hotel rates which are already listed
- Not to infuse Go-MMT funds to further discount hotel rates
- No service charge on hotel bookings
- They take service charge on stand-alone hotels only
- They don't take service charge on chain hotels
- They don't take service charge on airline tickets
- NO PLB/VDI-free room demands/schemes
- Delist all illegal hotels, illegal guest houses, illegal B&Bs immediately



which it would be difficult to do business for one party but be a win-win situation for the other."

He further says, "Going back to December 7, 2018, whilst the Ahmedabad Hoteliers blocked Go-MMT in the city, Kalra wanted to sit with FHRAI and work out the issues. The team sent to "resolve" arrived but with a fixed agenda of "fixing" only commissions, that too by a paltry reduction to 22 from 25 per cent. The same FHRAI today has no locus standi



# An oasis within Pune

The magnificent Greco-Roman structure of Amanora The Fern, Pune, not only appeals to leisure guests and families but also business travellers and the MICE segment because of its myriad offerings.

Located within the city and close to major IT hubs as well as the airport, Amanora The Fern Hotels & Club is a magnificent Greco-Roman structure. It has large, open spaces and beautiful landscaping and water bodies, exuding an indulgent feel of a resort within the city. It also has excellent MICE facilities to host conferences/events with expansive 2.5 acres of lush

## Amanora's green measures

- Aerators in taps to save water
- Dual flush system in washrooms
- Recycling of used water for gardening
- 'Save our Planet' cards in rooms to create awareness towards the environment
- Gravity water source used for kitchens and washrooms

green lawns and an amphitheatre that accommodates up to 3000 persons.

Sharing an update about the property, **Amit Kumar Sharma**, General Manager, Amanora The Fern Hotels & Club, says, "We have recently opened Elle Spa & Salon – a dynamic Parisian brand devoted to fashion that offers spa treatments and salon services. We have also started The Bodypower Gym, offering high quality international equipment and first-class trainers headed by an experienced UK trainer. We are also adding 20 luxury rooms keeping MICE and the wedding business in mind."

The property has also tied up with key OTAs. "Being digital is the way forward for the industry in today's era. Our dedicated marketing team promotes across multiple channels including Facebook, Instagram

and all other social media platforms. Also, our structured network of regional sales offices in all major cities of India helps us to promote the property in India and internationally as well," Sharma adds.

With the new year having just begun, the property has firmed up its goals for 2019. Sharma says that on priority is further strengthening its corporate and social events database and acquiring new clients. "Another focus will be on opening a new speciality restaurant and the much-awaited movie theatre to enhance our guest experience further along with driving club membership sales to newer heights," he adds.

The hotel also makes it a point to remain green and uses technology to improve guest experience while also improving operational efficiency.



**Amit Kumar Sharma**



# What do CORPORATES look

Wooing corporates and securing corporate events, given how competitive this space is, becomes extremely difficult for vendors like hotels, airlines, and agents. We try to find out from corporates themselves what they consider and what they don't when deciding.

**Kanchan Nath**

The business of MICE means big money because of the large number of people it brings in and the exposure it gets in terms of publicity as a result of large-scale events. Different corporates have different expectations from an incentive trip or an event. Some factors that help seal the deal are destination, location, brand of the hotel, facilities, negotiations, and relationships.

#### **Accessibility**

**Jigar Joshi**, AVP, Administration, Samsara Capital, says, "The main criteria to choose a destination remains accessibility to the destination and the property where MICE is being set up. It should be convenient to



**Madhu Vachhani**

travel to from the destination's airport. Long, tiresome traveling hours can break a deal. All in all, convenience is key. At times, the property is good but far off. In such a case, it would not be advisable to go to that particular destination. After all, it's not leisure travel and time is of essence."

#### **Location challenges**

It is safe to say that each corporate, depending on the clients it deals with, has different needs, and vendors need to consider this before sharing their offers. **Madhu Vachhani**, Senior Manager, Khaitan & Co, one of India's oldest and full-service law firms, says, "Being a law firm, our major focus is on the category of the hotel, the quality of service it offers, and the security it provides. Security is the most critical factor for us. Apart from that, when planning for groups, a key aspect we look into is how far the hotel is from the airport. Cost-effectiveness is another aspect we concentrate on. After all, at the end of the day, we all talk about how much the spend is!"



**Jigar Joshi**



Suresh Pulgam



Gerard D'Mello



Kishore Dolas



Edna Martis

# for these days?

## Experience is prime

The charm of international travel is a sure-shot incentive for most. **Siva Sankara Ala**, Manager, Travel & Hospitality, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, says, "For MICE, destination is prime and then we look at the number of hotels in that destination. First we check whether all the facilities are available at the destination or property, followed by banqueting facilities, and then comes in the budget. If the property is good and so is the destination, we do not mind spending a bit more. Experience is most important!"

## Game-changing trends

With so many destinations to choose from and repeat destinations coming up with innovative marketing strategies, corporates are spoilt for choice. **Suresh Pulgam**, Senior Manager - Corporate Real Estate Management (CREM), Kotak Mahindra Bank, says, "Choosing a destination depends on



Siva Sankara Ala

requirement. How far they can go for a particular event or whether they need a location close by are few aspects to be considered. Innovation is the name of the game in MICE."

## A chance to brag

Giving a holistic perspective on the requirements of MICE, **Gerard D'Mello**, Vice President, ECL Finance, comments, "The Indian traveller does not mind paying a premium for something he

can talk about. Also, the destination needs to be convenient; there are many destinations where people cannot travel to for various reasons. Visa norms, connectivity, etc., are all aspects that one has to look into."

To this, **Kishore Dolas**, Manager - Administration, Zycus Infotech, adds that the main thing is that most corporates go for brands or stand-alone properties that have not been heard of, so people get an opportunity to brag there as well.

## Spacious rooms help

**Edna Martis**, Office Manager, Alvarez & Marshal India, concludes, "The hotel should be a luxury property that meets all offsite requirements. Rooms should be spacious, there should be activities for people to do, etc. There should also be a good banqueting venue."



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# The glassware maketh the WINE

It's not just the water and the soil that give the taste and flavour to wine, the glassware it is served in also plays a key role in enhancing the taste and texture of the drink.

An insightful masterclass conducted by sommelier **Magandeep Singh** broke many myths about wine and how it needs to be served to not just preserve but also enhance its taste and texture. Conducted at the beautiful Sofitel Mumbai, the masterclass was attended by some of the most competitive sommeliers who hailed from the industry and various institutions of Mumbai and Pune.

The event included a wine-tasting session conducted by Singh, who understands why good wine glasses are important, as he successfully imparted the knowledge to other sommeliers and wine enthusiasts through this masterclass. Singh is India's first French-qualified sommelier, award-winning writer, and TV show host that makes him an expert in the industry.

Also part of the event was Lucaris that associated with the sommelier. The evening began with Singh giving an insight on the different kinds of glasses

from Lucaris' Desire collection, through which he brought to light how wine when served in different types and shapes of glasses can enhance the taste and texture.

Singh said, "The most important thing that one looks for in glassware is that it should be durable, transparent, and affordable. Lucaris knew

“

The most important thing one looks for in glassware is that it be durable, transparent, and affordable. Lucaris knew how to enter the market and was spot on

”

how to enter the market and got it spot on. I always like to create long-term relationships.”

Lucaris is the preferred partner of global hotel chain groups in Asia Pacific, including Marriott, Hilton, and Kempinski as well as

Minor and Dusit in Thailand. In India, it is present in luxury-brand hotels and restaurants nationwide including Hyatt Regency Delhi, JW Marriott Jaipur, Westin Gurugram, and recently Indian Accent restaurant.

Speaking about the potential for Lucaris in the India market, **Veeranuch Trangtrakul**, Marketing



**Magandeep Singh**

Manager, Ocean Glass, and Lucaris, said, "India is still in the growing phase when it comes to wine consumption and therefore has great potential. The market as a whole is keen on identifying the different varieties and best of best wines."

# Prosecco **tastes** success

**Domenico Scimone**, Global Sales & Marketing Director, Carpenè Malvolti Prosecco, was in India recently to promote the 150-year-old Carpenè Malvolti Prosecco that is made in the Veneto region of Italy.

Hazel Jain

## Where does the Indian market stand as far as wine culture is concerned?

Wine consumption in the Indian market has grown well in the last few years, especially in the sparkling sector. Both hotels and restaurants represent an important sector for the consumption of Prosecco and this has grown steadily.

## Have you reached out to any of the hotels or restaurants in India?

Yes, we are present in hotels

and restaurants, but the distribution is still growing, reaching more customers in the on-trade channel. We are confident on the general growth of Prosecco's consumption in the Indian market. It is all thanks to the history of Carpenè Malvolti that was the first winery to produce this product as a sparkling wine and the first to believe in the potential of this product that became so popular during these last few years.

## Tell us about the history of Carpenè Malvolti.

Since 1868, with Antonio

Carpenè as the first-generation member, all Carpenè members have given a big contribution to provide the right recognition to Prosecco and its territory of origin. We hope that in the future the Carpenè Malvolti brand will expand in this market as well, which is more recent than other markets where the presence of our brand established itself much earlier. To do so, we count on the partnership we have with Aspri Spirits, a valuable partner for us.



**Domenico Scimone**

## The ready reckoner

Drinking wine is an art and a trend that is becoming popular among Indians. We bring to you quick tips on drinking wine and its popular types.

### Types of wine

Red wine  
White wine  
Rosé wine  
Sparkling wine  
Dessert wine



## Wine etiquette to know

- Hold your glass by the stem or the base.
- Smell your wine. Sniff it, taste it, and think about it.
- Try to drink from the same position on your wine glass to reduce unsightly mouth marks.
- When opening a wine bottle, try to do it quietly, like a ninja.
- When clinking, clink glasses bell to bell (it reduces breakage) and look your clinking-buddy in the eye.
- Pouring wine? Hold the bottle towards the base.
- Fill your glass less than half way to give your wine room to breathe.
- Try to keep your portion of drinking equivalent to that of the other people around you.
- Offer wine to others before pouring seconds for yourself.

(Source: Wine Folly)



# What makes or breaks bookings

IHG and SAMHI's survey into road warriors' travel considerations across top five metros shows that 51 per cent of travellers face challenges whilst finding a strategically located mid-market hotel in India.

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), in conjunction with SAMHI, conducted a survey to understand the challenges and considerations of road warriors in India today. The survey was conducted by Nielsen India in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad with 25 to 44-year-old respondents who travel largely for business across India.

The survey concludes that finding a hotel in the right location is one of the most challenging aspects of planning a trip. This challenge is further highlighted by the respondents when ranking the most important attributes when booking a hotel for the trip.

Around 29 per cent of respondents ranked 'location of the hotel' as the most important attribute to feel confident to succeed while on a business

trip. The next most important attribute was 'comfort of the stay' ranked in second place with 18 per cent of respondents selecting it as the most important consideration for booking their hotel. Both attributes were ranked amongst 12 attributes in total including price and amenities.

**Vivek Bhalla**, Regional Vice President, South West Asia, IHG, commented on the survey, "All our market studies to date have shown that location is a key consideration for travellers in the mid-market segment. This survey confirms the same from a consumers' perspective."

He continued, "Location has also been a pivotal element of our partnership with SAMHI as each of the 14 hotels in the Holiday Inn Express

portfolio is located in a highly accessible, commercialised area which allows for convenient transportation, business services, and great dining options. Guests staying at a Holiday Inn Express hotel can be rest assured that their stay will make them 'More Than Ready' for their travel mission."

**Ashish Jakhawala**, CEO and Founder, SAMHI, commented, "We are thrilled to find that both location of the hotel and comfort of stay have ranked so highly in this survey. We have been working in partnership with IHG to differentiate the Holiday Inn Express brand in India. Our portfolio of 14 hotels has been designed to provide an enhanced product, design and service culture that appeals to the savvy, hip, and cool Indian traveller who is aspiring for success."

“ Finding a hotel in the right location is one of the most challenging aspects of planning a trip; comfort of stay comes next ”

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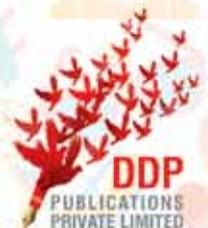
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# Why technology is essential

**Eleuterio Fernandes**, VP Sales EMEA at Exterity, a provider of IP video and digital signage technology, says that an investment in technology is essential for the survival of hospitality players in India.

In recent years, India has become one of the world's fastest growing tourist destinations. Over the last decade, annual overseas visitors have doubled to 10 million, making it a hot bed for the international hospitality industry. India is also experiencing an in-country tourism boom as a growing middle class starts to explore its homeland.

A large percentage of the spending from both domestic and foreign tourists will be absorbed by hoteliers. As tourism in India continues to grow, the local hotelier market will become more competitive. One of the ways forward-thinking hoteliers can get ahead of their rivals is by creating a better-than-home guest experience, which includes a hotel's in-room entertainment offering, such as free and pay-TV plus access to higher-value additional sales opportunities to deliver a better guest experience and

more profitability. By deploying more interactive video services and enabling guests to access complementary options directly via the TV screen itself, hoteliers can ensure they are able to meet this demand. Even hoteliers facing unpredictable weather conditions can find ways to use this system.

It is important at this point to note that adoption of IPTV technologies in the Indian hospitality market has typically been slow due to infrastructure, connectivity, and regulation challenges. Today, live TV content has to be delivered via local operators who provide their own decoders. For hospitality organisations, this adds a significant level of complexity - instead of being able to go through a single provider solving all the technical challenges, they have to select each live news, sports, entertainment, music and children's TV channel they want to offer, both

local and international. This greatly impacts both the cost of implementing live TV in hotels and the technical deployment thereof. This contrasts greatly with other parts of Asia, where a single provider can easily aggregate multiple channels into a single box, streamlining the distribution of live TV content and enabling hoteliers to focus on providing additional services.

As better infrastructure becomes available, it will become easier for hoteliers to employ IP-based technologies to offer guests access to VoD content that appeals to domestic and international travellers, such as local services like Voot and ALT Balaji, along with newer international rivals such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video.

*(Views expressed above are the author's personal views. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)*



**Eleuterio Fernandes**

# APPOINTMENTS



★ **Seema Roy**  
Area Managing Director - South Asia, Middle East & Africa Preferred Hotels & Resorts

Seema Roy has been appointed as Area Managing Director for South Asia, Middle East & Africa at Preferred Hotels & Resorts. In this role, Roy will drive retention and development efforts of the brand's growing portfolio in South Asia, Middle East

& Africa, supported by the company's regional offices in New Delhi, Dubai, and Cape Town. Since joining Preferred Hotels & Resorts in 2010, she has played a key role in successfully amplifying brand awareness of Preferred Hotels & Resorts in the region. She most recently served as Director of Marketing for Asia Pacific.



★ **Gaurav Sindhwani**  
Director, Global Sales & Development - South Asia Preferred Hotels & Resorts

Preferred Hotels & Resorts has appointed Gaurav Sindhwani as Director, Global Sales & Development – South Asia. In the new role, Sindhwani will continue to drive the company's efforts in corporate, MICE and leisure sales, and also

take on additional responsibilities of overseeing the development and retention of the brand's portfolio across the region. He brings more than 20 years of experience of working in India's hospitality industry. Prior to joining Preferred in May 2015, he served as DoSM for The Imperial New Delhi.



★ **CS Ramachandran**  
Vice President, Revenue Account Management - South Asia, Middle East, Africa & Australasia Preferred Hotels & Resorts

CS Ramachandran has been appointed as Vice President, Revenue Account Management – South Asia, Middle East, Africa & Australasia for Preferred Hotels & Resorts. He will lead the regional revenue management team to drive strategic success for the brand, and continue to assist member hotels in maximising the effectiveness of their online distribution channels and revenue optimisation.



★ **Manish Jain**  
Chief Financial Officer Sterling Holiday Resorts

Sterling Holiday Resorts has appointed Manish Jain as its Chief Financial Officer. In the new role, Jain will be responsible for the finance, accounting, tax, insurance, and treasury functions at Sterling Holidays. He is a seasoned finance

professional with over 26 years of experience in the hospitality and manufacturing sectors. Prior to joining Sterling, Jain held the position of Finance Director at Fassco International in Abu Dhabi and as CFO at Roots Corporation.





## Appointments



★ **Ravi Rai**  
General Manager  
Hilton Mumbai International  
Airport

Hilton Mumbai International Airport has appointed Ravi Rai as the new General Manager. In the new role, he will be responsible for overseeing hotel operations for the 171-room hotel along with its F&B programme. His last assignment was at Novotel Chennai Sipcot in the role of General Manager. Rai brings with him a wealth of experience, having spent 18 years in the hotel industry. His career has included being in various positions in food and beverage. His previous roles have been with Novotel Visakhapatnam, ibis Bengaluru, Park Plaza Bengaluru, and Vivanta by Taj Kovalam among others. Rai started out as managing the beverage services at the Holiday Inn, Pune, for prominent events.



★ **Parvez Nisar**  
Hotel Manager  
Fairfield by Marriott Pune Kharadi

Parvez Nisar has been appointed as the Hotel Manager at Fairfield by Marriott Pune Kharadi. A well-recognised industry veteran with almost 18 years of experience in the luxury and upscale hotel segment, Nisar is adept and well-acquainted with the industry. He has successfully driven the conversion and re-launch of Premier Inn Pune to Fairfield by Marriott Pune Kharadi. Nisar's role as the Hotel Manager will involve delivering high levels of customer service and successful positioning of the hotel. He will also be responsible for conceptualising programmes that enhance customer relations, re-align cost management in order to increase year-on-year profits, staff engagement activities and innovation.

★ **Jeslin Mathews**  
DoSM - Complex  
Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar and  
Sheraton Grand, Pune

Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa and Sheraton Grand Pune have strengthened their leadership team by appointing Jeslin Mathews as the new Director of Sales and Marketing - Complex. He has vast experience in the region, strong leadership, and most importantly, his strategic and innovative approach will continue to add value to both the brands. He will lead all the sales and marketing-related functions of the hotels. Mathews has been a part of the Marriott family since 2010, his prior stint being the Director of Sales at the JW Marriott Pune, where he drove the sales force and aggressively tapped into the special corporates, MICE, and groups segments. He brings with him over a decade of experience within the hospitality industry.



★ **Ashwin Vaidya**  
Director of Rooms  
Renaissance Mumbai

Renaissance Mumbai, the 600-room property located on the banks of Lake Powai, has promoted Ashwin Vaidya as the hotel's new Director of Rooms. Here, he will be responsible for the smooth operation of guest services and their quality, while maximising room revenue. After beginning his career in 1991 at the Oberoi Mumbai, Vaidya joined the Renaissance Mumbai in 2007 as a Front Office Executive. After that he also worked as the Duty Manager at Marriott Goa in 2010, and in 2011 was appointed as the AFOM for Courtyard and Fairfield in Bengaluru. With a long career in the hospitality industry and extensive knowledge and experience of the brands at Marriott International, Vaidya is a great asset to the hotel, which celebrated its 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018.



## Crispy celebrations

Cornitos Nacho Crisps are available in four variants - Spinach, Beetroot, Melange, and Quinoa. These 'Veggie' Nacho Crisps are made from natural vegetable extracts and super grains blended with corn masa and seasoned with delicious spices. Veggie Nacho Crisps are made by a Mexican process of making stone-ground masa using non-GMO corn. Crisps are wedge-shaped, extra thin, gluten-free, and cooked in healthy corn oil. A wholesome snack, Spinach Nacho Crisps are sprinkled with Italian herbs (thyme, oregano and basil) that give them a mouthwatering flavour. Beetroot Nacho Crisps have a spicy pepper flavour that tickles the taste buds. Melange Nacho Crisps are sprinkled with Himalayan pink salt and roasted garlic. Quinoa Nacho Crisps have also been sprinkled with Himalayan pink salt, giving a fun and tasty twist to the classic nachos.



## Stick no bits!

Zanuff, a leading manufacturer of restaurant and catering products for the hospitality industry, has launched aluminium-based non-stick frying pans. The product is induction-friendly and helps save energy. Zanuff's innovative techniques help it manufacture the highest quality of products for the industry. The non-stick frying pans are part of Zanuff's wide range of products for the industry that includes combi-oven accessories, chafing dishes, GN pans, etc. The latest pans have a Teflon coating that makes them non-stick, and have a sturdy, long handle that makes the pans easy to use and manoeuvre. Ideal for today's modern kitchens, Zanuff offers world-class, long-lasting frying pans to chefs.



## With comfort comes hygiene

VitrA has launched the 'Frame' series that has been intelligently designed with geometric symmetry and where authentic modern design merges with the finest technology and functionality. The Frame series is designed to create a pleasurable bathroom experience for its discerning users. The monobloc washbasin is a sculpturally unique washbasin that makes a style statement. The washbasin unit and mirrors with LED lighting and soft-closing drawers create an elegant atmosphere in the bathroom. The series also offers no-contact cleaning and helps save water with the photocell control toilet bidet. The collection is the perfect idea of not forgoing aesthetics for hygiene, comfort, and space-optimisation.



## Stretch it out for coffee

The latest collection of coffee tables by IOTA is transformable and expandable, and necessary for the space-challenged urban dweller. The panels are hidden inside the table allowing you to serve six to eight guests very comfortably. It can change in shape and function according to its use. When closed, it is an elegant coffee table to be placed in front of the sofa or, when opened, it turns into a stunning, convenient, and practical table to cater to more guests at a time. One of the coffee tables, MyFlower, embodies rare attributes that are inspired by nature. It showcases three synchronically swivelling tops where the top one is round and the bottom two are in the shape of a four-petal flower. HIVE is an extendable table with ceramic and glass tops, and a painted or galvanised steel base. This piece of furniture is equipped with an innovative



mechanism that allows the three floors below to open. BONNE VIE is an extendable table which allows all three floors to open.

### A 'World' of colour

World Bazaar's latest collection offers the most fascinating pieces from the high-end luxury brands HOUE, Fermob, and Fatboy. The range is absolutely comfortable with a palette of bright colours available in single chairs or in a three-seating bench style. The outdoor tables, rocking chairs, sun-loungers, beanbags, hammocks, and planters are equally stunning. The range not only creates a space that is aesthetically pleasing, but also has a beautiful look to enhance an outdoor space while withstanding all weather conditions. From weave chairs to steel or aluminium chairs and tables, World Bazaar offers a range that is carefully curated and meets international standards. The range emulates luxury resort living for all kinds of spaces.



### Cover up the grim!

Ventura International presents the metallic and handmade designer laminates from the German brand 'Wallenstein'. The range has rust, stone, and metal surfaces. It features natural, UV-resistant surfaces. The laminates can be processed with regular commercial wood working machines. All the products are ecologically harmless and easy to recycle. This surface design replicates aged metal surfaces in a way that makes them look convincingly real and gives viewers a new experience of a room. Its sumptuous appearance and grace will charm anyone who sees it. Aesthetics and design go hand in hand with architecture and space. The iridescence of the metal and its antique patina in soft tones are mesmerising. The Wallenstein collection has several applications and can be used for designing interiors, as wall coverings, for furniture, as well as to deck up commercial spaces.

### Use as you please!

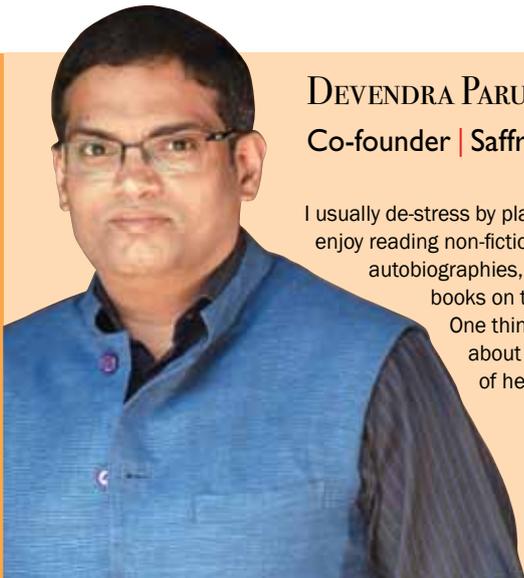
Displaying an aesthetic that refashions the natural in unique and versatile ways, Ficus unveils a series of beautiful rustic and contemporary consoles. These chic consoles come in unique silhouettes and designs that make them the perfect statement pieces. The versatile cabinets have many a use and are useful for storing photo albums, linen, or even crockery. Ficus furniture is usually crafted in fine teak wood, however, if designers or customers prefer pine wood, oak wood or Indian rosewood, the consoles can be rendered as per their preference. The in-house design team and master craftsmen at Ficus are at hand to give veneer, painted surfaces, solid wood polish, and other exclusive artistic touches.



### Travel with Crest

Carlton has brought Crest travel bags for customers. The new range of bags is equipped with three locks (including a TSA lock) and no zips that ensure solid protection for your belongings. Adding to the smart functionality of the bags is the innovative Cruise Pro handle, which has buttons placed on the sides instead of in the centre so travellers can move around with absolute ease without accidentally pushing down the handle. The bag also offers spacious interiors and is equipped with useful packing amenities like shoe pouch, toilet kit, and a hidden pocket. The product is chic, lightweight, and secure.





**DEVENDRA PARULEKAR**

Co-founder | SaffronStays

I usually de-stress by playing tennis. I also enjoy reading non-fictional books such as autobiographies, motivational books, books on thought leadership, etc.

One thing that people don't know about me is that I am scared of heights. To overcome this

fear, I have now started trekking and hiking. My most memorable holiday moment has to be my honeymoon 17 years ago, when my father had gifted us a stay in a Director's Special colonial bungalow in Fort Kochi. The idea of an exclusive holiday home gave birth to SaffronStays and the SaffronStays First Family Membership.

“To overcome the fear of heights, I am now trekking and hiking”

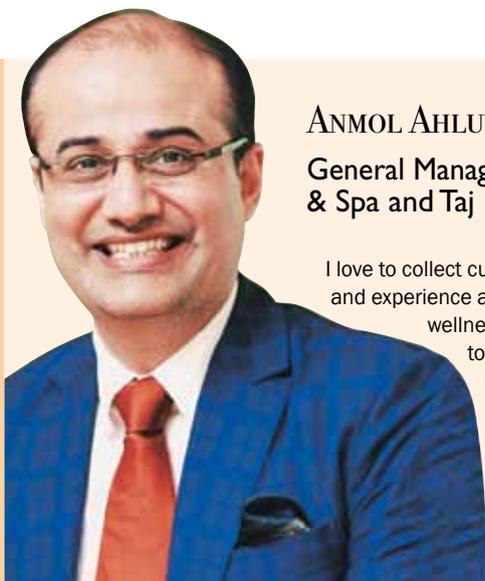
**NIKHIL AGARWAL**

Chief Executive Officer | All Things Nice

Listening to loud music, opening a bottle of wine, and taking frequent holidays help me de-stress. I'm passionate about travelling. I'm always ready to pack my backpack and just go! I love architecture and if not doing what I do, I would have loved to design buildings. A memory

I cherish - while backpacking through Europe, I stopped at a bar with just enough money for two Guinness'. By the end of the night I knew everyone at the bar and they never let me pay for a thing. I love the quieter mountain regions in the North of India.

“If not doing what I do, I would have loved to design buildings”



**ANMOL AHLUWALIA**

General Manager (North Goa) | Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa and Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa

I love to collect curious, collect art and artefacts, and experience and learn various aspects of wellness. At some stage in life, I want to open my own spa or nursery. I love interacting and working

with NGOs. I believe in the concept of paying it forward. I also write in my spare time. I love to write short stories and I am passionate about showcasing the talent of many others who have missed out in life for the lack of opportunity.

“At some stage in life, I want to open my own spa or nursery”

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3.2 L



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MX-AC300

- SS304 Rust Proof Stainless Steel Jar
- 550 Watts Powerful Motor

### MEAT GRINDER



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- 1000 Watts / 1500 Watts
- 3 Types of Blades (Rough / Mid / Fine)
- Rotary switch with reverse function

\*Terms & conditions apply

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