

Hotel TALK

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Anil Chadha

ON KEEPING HOSPITALITY
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MINOR TARGETS 50 HOTELS IN INDIA BY NEXT DECADE

William E Heinecke

MARKETS LEARN IN TIMES OF DISRUPTION

Manav Thadani

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Hospitality at a reset



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The challenges of over-designed experiences, evolving travel behaviour, and pricing inconsistency point to a deeper structural concern — a gradual erosion of fundamentals.

Hospitality today is more sophisticated than ever, yet, in some ways, less aligned with its own fundamentals. Over the past couple of decades, the industry has embraced technology, design innovation, and digital distribution at an unprecedented scale. Hotels are visually more compelling, more system-driven, and more globally standardised. However, what the industry now needs, is to rethink on how hospitality is designed, delivered, and monetised for the future.

One of the clearest signs in this shift is the growing tendency to overdesign and overspecify guest experience. In the pursuit of differentiation, hotels have introduced increasingly layered service elements and curated environments. Business hotels too are undergoing a quiet but significant transition to meet the expectations of the modern corporate traveller who is more selective, whose expectations are higher, and for whom the line between work and personal experience is relatively blurred. Data-driven studies in hospitality confirm that guest behaviour is increasingly dynamic and less predictable, requiring more adaptive models rather than standardised formats.

Yet, research on service perception and customer feedback also indicates that guests consistently prioritise clarity, ease, and functional value over excessive complexity. When experience becomes engineered for impression rather than usability, it risks diluting the core purpose of hospitality, which is comfort. Guests do not remember how many options were offered. They remember whether the experience was reliable.

These challenges of over-designed experiences, evolving travel behaviour, and pricing inconsistency are not isolated issues. They point to a deeper structural concern: a gradual erosion of fundamentals.

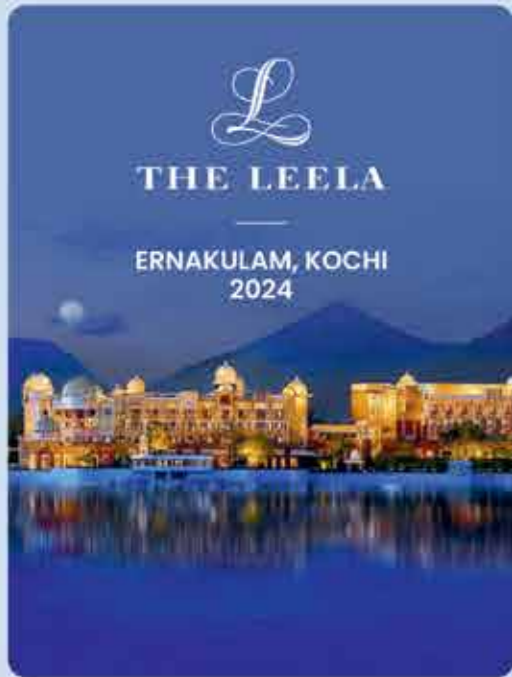
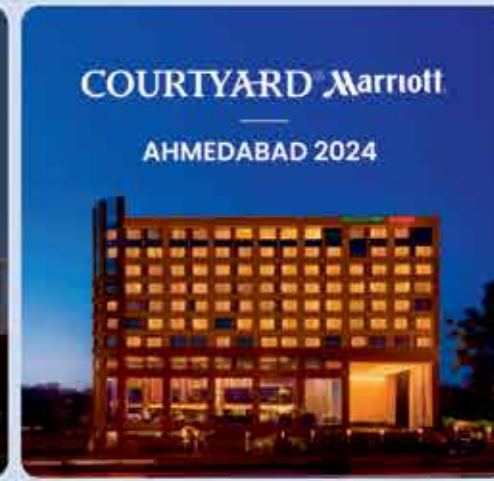
Re-engineering hospitality, therefore, is not about adding more layers of innovation. It is about removing what is unnecessary and restoring clarity, which is simplifying guest journeys rather than complicating them, redefining business hotels as adaptive, multi-functional spaces, and rebuilding pricing strategies around consistency and value.

I feel that the hospitality industry stands at a point of reset, and the next phase will not be defined by who innovates the most, but by who aligns the best. Hotels that succeed will be those that understand when to simplify, when to adapt, and when to hold their ground.

Cheers,
Sunil Ghadiok

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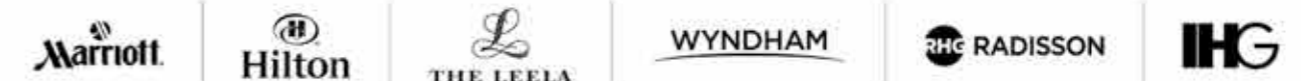
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

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Hospitality holds steady amid domestic demand surge

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ITC Hotels is a global exemplar in sustainability

In HotelTALK's Sustainability Special issue, **Anil Chadha** winds back the clock of time to when ITC Hotels Limited chose the path less travelled, quietly planting the idea of "Responsible Luxury" within the long corridors of hospitality. It did not announce itself as a revolution, but moved like a thought slowly turning into belief, blending luxury's gilded spirit with hospitality's resilient soul.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI



Solar panels - ITC Grand Chola



Anil Chadha
Managing Director
ITC Hotels Limited

“LEED Zero isn’t just about being green; it’s about being resilient, relevant, and responsible.”

Q. As sustainability becomes a baseline expectation, how do you intend to convert this leadership into long-term competitive advantage?

A. At ITC Hotels, Responsible Luxury has never been a reaction to trends; it has been a core business philosophy for over two decades. We chose the road less travelled.

Back in 2009, nobody thought that two opposing ideals — luxury and sustainability — could become enduring partners. With the launch of ITC Gardenia, we instituted Responsible Luxury, a new paradigm in hospitality. Luxury has always been seen as ‘excessive’ and ‘splurge’ while sustainability makes one feel limited or less. We knew this was a future-forward concept and demonstrated how both could be great partners. Clearly, inspired by our age-old traditions that have taught us to invest well in resources. For instance, water. Not a drop at our

hotels is wasted. We have been using water in glass bottles even before it became a buzzword. We have always encouraged seasonal produce and today over 50 per cent of our produce is locally sourced.

As sustainability becomes a baseline expectation across hospitality, our advantage lies in how deeply it is embedded into our brand promise, asset design, and daily operations. This integration builds trust and preference. Today’s discerning guest, whether a global business traveller or a luxury leisure traveller, actively chooses brands that align with their values. That preference translates into superior demand quality, not merely higher volumes. Guests are not paying a premium for sustainability. We see sustainability as an inherent part of the offering.

Responsible Luxury creates structural efficiencies. Investments in energy efficiency, renewable sourcing, water self sufficiency,

**Sustainability:
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- **Traceability & Sunya Aqua:** Initiatives like Sunya Aqua (zero-mile water) and “Local Love” (hyper-local sourcing) are integral to the culinary experience
- **Low-waste Kitchens:** Focus on low-waste and energy-efficient kitchens, aligned with LEED Platinum standards for long-term margin protection against rising food inflation
- **Farm to Fork & Local Love initiatives:** A big step towards reducing carbon footprints

**Global recognition
for Responsible
Luxury**

- World’s Leading Sustainable Organisation 2025 at World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards (WSTHA) 2025
- World’s Leading Sustainable Employer 2025 at World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards (WSTHA) 2025
- World’s Leading Sustainable Food & Nutrition Initiative 2025 at World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards (WSTHA) 2025
- World’s Leading Sustainable Marketing Campaign 2025 at World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards (WSTHA) 2025
- 1st hotel chain in India to be recognised with the Leadership Award for Organisational Excellence 2024 by the US Green Building Council



EV charging station - ITC Grand Chola

Watergen machine at gym - ITC Mughal



and waste circularity reduce operating volatility and insulate margins over the long term. As input costs rise and regulatory expectations intensify, we remain structurally ahead of the curve.

Most importantly, this approach future proofs our portfolio. While many players are now retrofitting to meet new standards, our assets are resilient by design. As one team, we are driven by the thought: “We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.”

Q. With global leadership in LEED Zero Carbon and Water certifications, how is ITC Hotels leveraging these credentials to unlock cost efficiency and premium positioning?

A. Our LEED Platinum, Zero Carbon, and Zero Water leadership is about turning environmental performance into measurable business outcomes. These certifications are not only symbolic; but they are also data-driven and performance verified.



ITC Maurya is a LEED Zero Water Hotel, certified as the World’s first LEED Platinum hotel (for existing buildings)

"At ITCHL, we are well-positioned to achieve our target of opening 220 hotels by 2030."

On the cost side, net zero energy operations and water self-sufficiency significantly lower utility intensity and shield against inflation, supply constraints, and regulatory risk. That directly improves operating stability and long-term profitability.

These credentials enhance our alignment with global ESG expectations and sustainability linked capital. LEED Zero makes our hotels future-ready, not exposed to transition risk.

Commercially, they strengthen our premium positioning. Global corporates, international partners, and conscious travellers increasingly prefer hospitality brands with credible climate action.

In simple terms, LEED Zero is not just about being green; it is about being resilient, relevant, and responsible.

Q. Post demerger, how has the growth trajectory across the ITC Hotels Limited (ITCHL) portfolio evolved, and what kind of key additions are you targeting across each segment to drive scale?

A. We witnessed a lot of interest across the ITCHL portfolio. The three mainstay brands: Welcomhotel, Storii, and Fortune hotels have already seen over 10 signings each since the demerger. We have seen a meaningful shift towards domestic destinations. Convenience, comfort, and better value proposition are encouraging Indian travellers to explore leisure destinations within the country. In the past few years, there has been a distinct trend towards

domestic destinations, even in tier II and tier III destinations, for immersive, enriching experiences. This has encouraged growth for Welcomhotel, Storii, and Fortune.

While we are targeting growth through new hotel signings in the upscale and midscale brands, at the same time, our focus on large convention hotels under the recently launched Epiq Collection brand is being demonstrated across key markets (metro, tier I and II). At ITCHL, we are well-positioned to achieve our target of opening 220 hotels by 2030.



Sunya Aqua - Zero-mile water



ITC Windsor, Bengaluru is the first hotel in the world to achieve the LEED Zero Carbon certification from the US Green Building Council (USGBC)



ITC Royal Bengal is a LEED Zero Water Hotel



Local Love - Koramcha Berries from the Kitchen Garden, ITC Sonar

Q. As the luxury traveller becomes younger and more experience-led, how is ITC Hotels recalibrating its product and brand strategy to stay relevant while protecting its legacy equity?

A. As the luxury traveller becomes younger and more experience-led, the shift for us has been less about recalibration and more about evolution with continuity. The core of ITC Hotels has always been Responsible Luxury: authentic, culturally rooted experiences

Brand portfolio

- ITC Hotels delivers world-class luxury experiences with a strong commitment to responsible practices
- Mementos focuses on immersive, memory-led luxury for the discerning experiential travellers
- Epiq Collection represents our new-age, upper-upscale offering designed for the evolving travellers seeking experience-led stays that blend with local context
- Welcomhotel offers enriching experiences with a growing layer of local insights that guests enjoy
- Storii caters to younger explorers seeking typical, boutique, and culturally immersive stays, where every property tells a unique story
- Fortune Hotels is a leading chain of first-class, full-service business, and leisure hotels
- WelcomHeritage brings alive India's living legacy with restored palaces, forts, heritage homes, and enchanting resorts

delivered in harmony with the environment, and that philosophy is inherently aligned with what younger travellers seek today.

Importantly, we are also building ecosystems beyond rooms through curated F&B, wellness, and platforms like Club ITC, which allow younger guests to engage with the brand earlier and more frequently.

Our approach is to protect legacy by deepening authenticity, while expanding access through more relevant, experience-led expressions of luxury. **HT**

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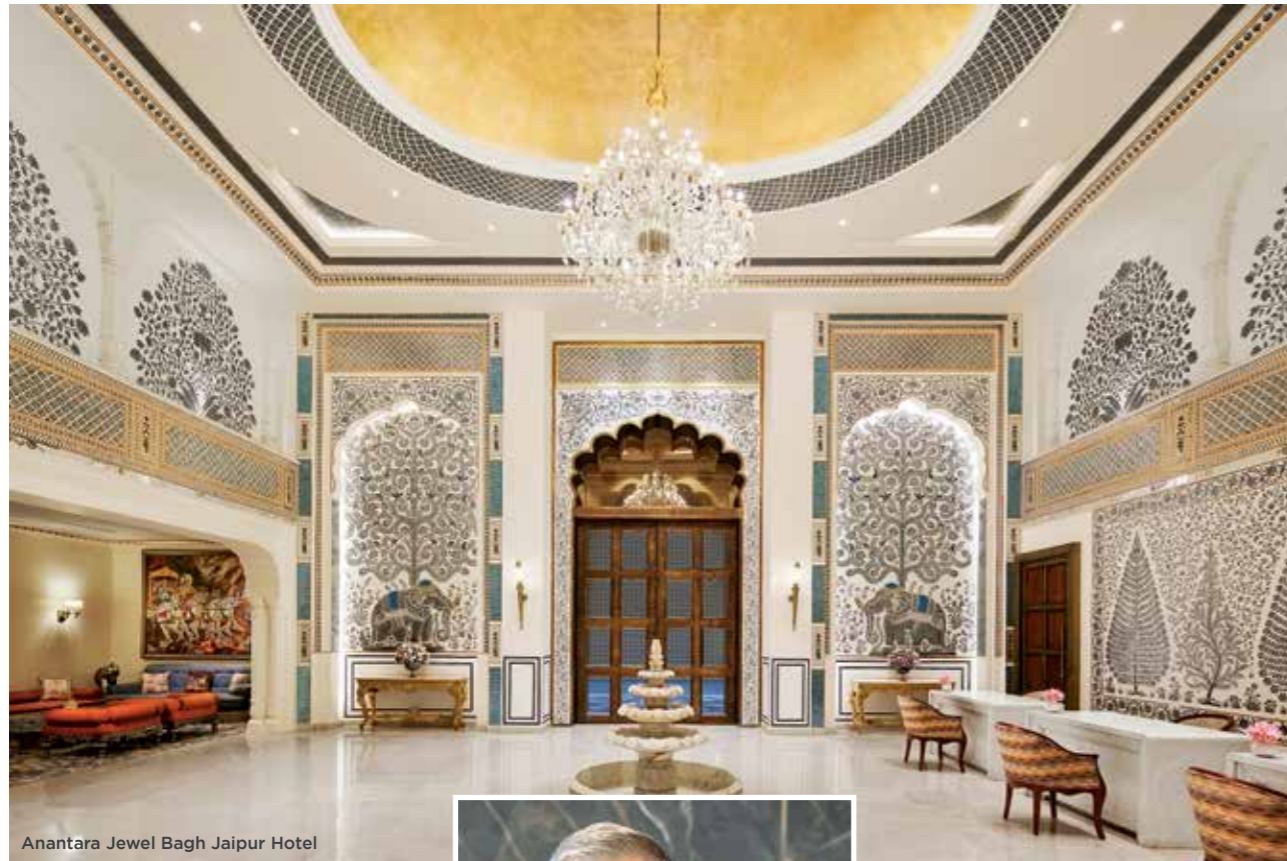
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Minor sizes up India for major growth

Aligned with an asset-light strategy, Minor is scaling up its India ambition, with over a dozen projects underway and eight likely to be locked in by 2026, says **William E Heinecke**.



Anantara Jewel Bagh Jaipur Hotel



William E Heinecke
Chairman & Founder
Minor International

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

Q. Post the first resort and urban entry of Anantara in India, how are you sizing the opportunity – the number of assets, brand mix, and the key performance indicators guiding your capital-light expansion?

A. India is a strategic, long-term growth market for us, and we are sizing the opportunity with clear scale ambitions and a deliberate brand mix. Our stated ambition is to reach 50 properties in India over the next decade, building a meaningful national footprint.

In terms of where we are today, we have one operating Anantara Jewel Bagh Jaipur Hotel in India and three signed properties (our first Avani in India and two new Anantara signings). Our development team is also in active discussions on more than a dozen projects, with about eight committed projects by the end of 2026.

Concerning brand mix, we are not choosing between luxury and scale. We are pursuing opportunities across our luxury, premium, and select portfolio as we feel there are opportunities in all segments for branded properties.

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Minor strategy in India is firmly partnership-led, aiming 50 properties in India over the next decade

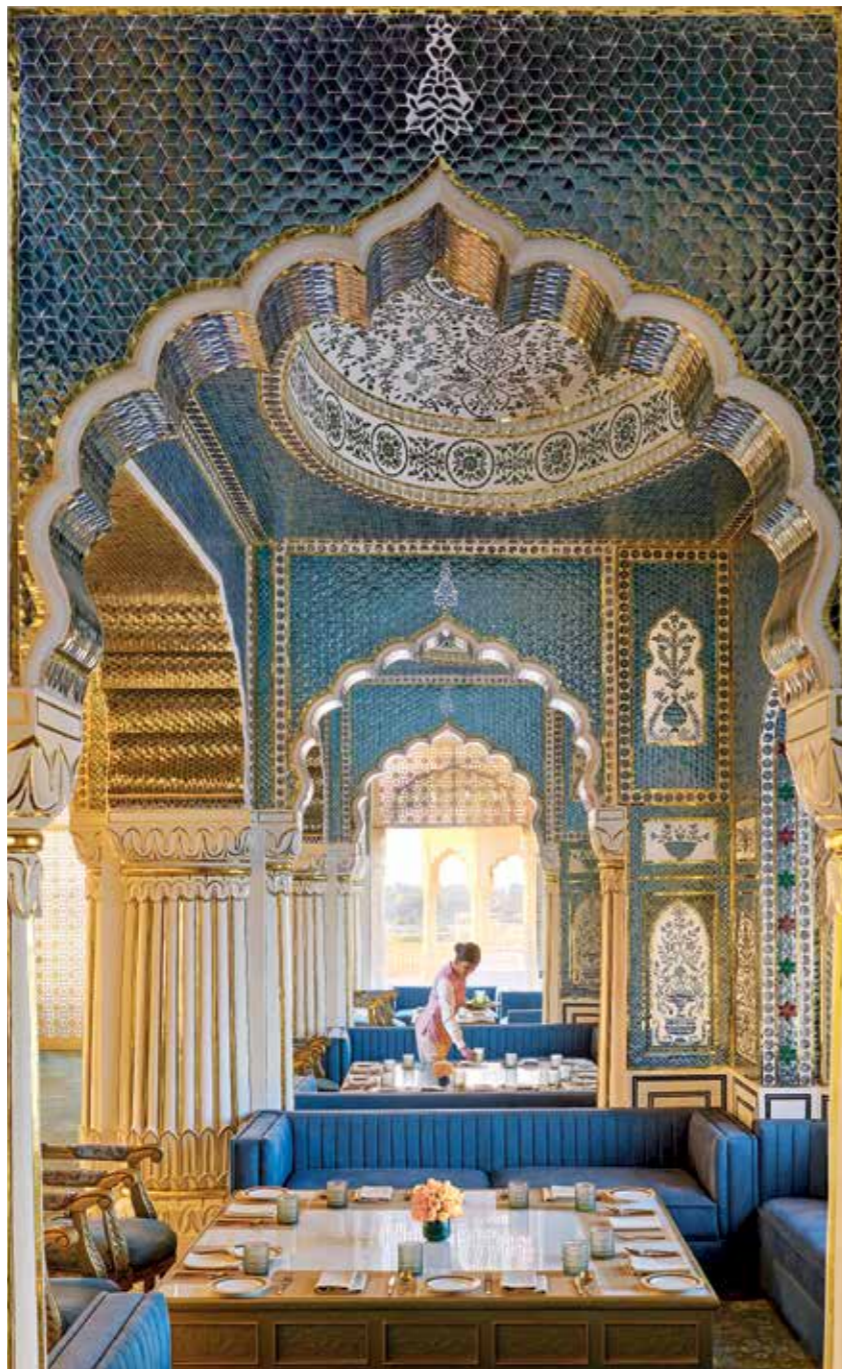
Our India strategy is asset-light today, and we are prioritising management-led growth and fast footprint expansion via conversions where it makes sense. The operating philosophy is quality growth, where we focus on rate and returns, not just scale.

Also, we measure how effectively we can bring owners incremental value through distribution and loyalty because that's what many Indian owners are increasingly asking global brands to deliver.

Q. Amid flight disruptions and fare volatility, do you see India facing short-term inbound pressures while benefitting from stronger domestic demand?

A. In the short-term, some inbound pressure is likely as flight disruptions and fare volatility affect international travel. That said, the medium to long-term outlook for India remains very strong. India is increasingly seen as an exotic, high-interest destination, and when global uncertainty rises, travel demand often shifts regionally rather than disappearing altogether.

Combined with robust domestic demand, rising affluence, and improving connectivity, these dynamics make India structurally resilient and also well-positioned to benefit over the longer term, particularly as travellers look for alternatives to more geopolitically sensitive regions.



Sheesh Mahal, Anantara Jewel Bagh Jaipur Hotel

Q. In India's competitive asset-light landscape, how does Minor Hotels secure the right partnerships, and what ensures your model delivers long-term value for both owners and the brand?

A. Our strategy in India is firmly partnership-led. We prioritise asset-light growth and work selectively with partners who align with our long-term vision rather than growing for scale alone. Practically, this means a two-speed approach: using conversions and takeovers in key cities to build momentum quickly, while pursuing greenfield developments in leisure and nature-led destinations with

the right long-term partners. Even where we do not own the real estate, we operate with an owner mindset, bringing the full depth of the Minor platform, from technical services to commercial and distribution support, to ensure value creation for partners and brand integrity over time.

Q. Having built Minor before turning 18 and remaining actively involved at this age, what lessons from your journey are relevant today, as hospitality faces a talent crunch across both frontline and leadership roles?

A. The key lessons are simple:



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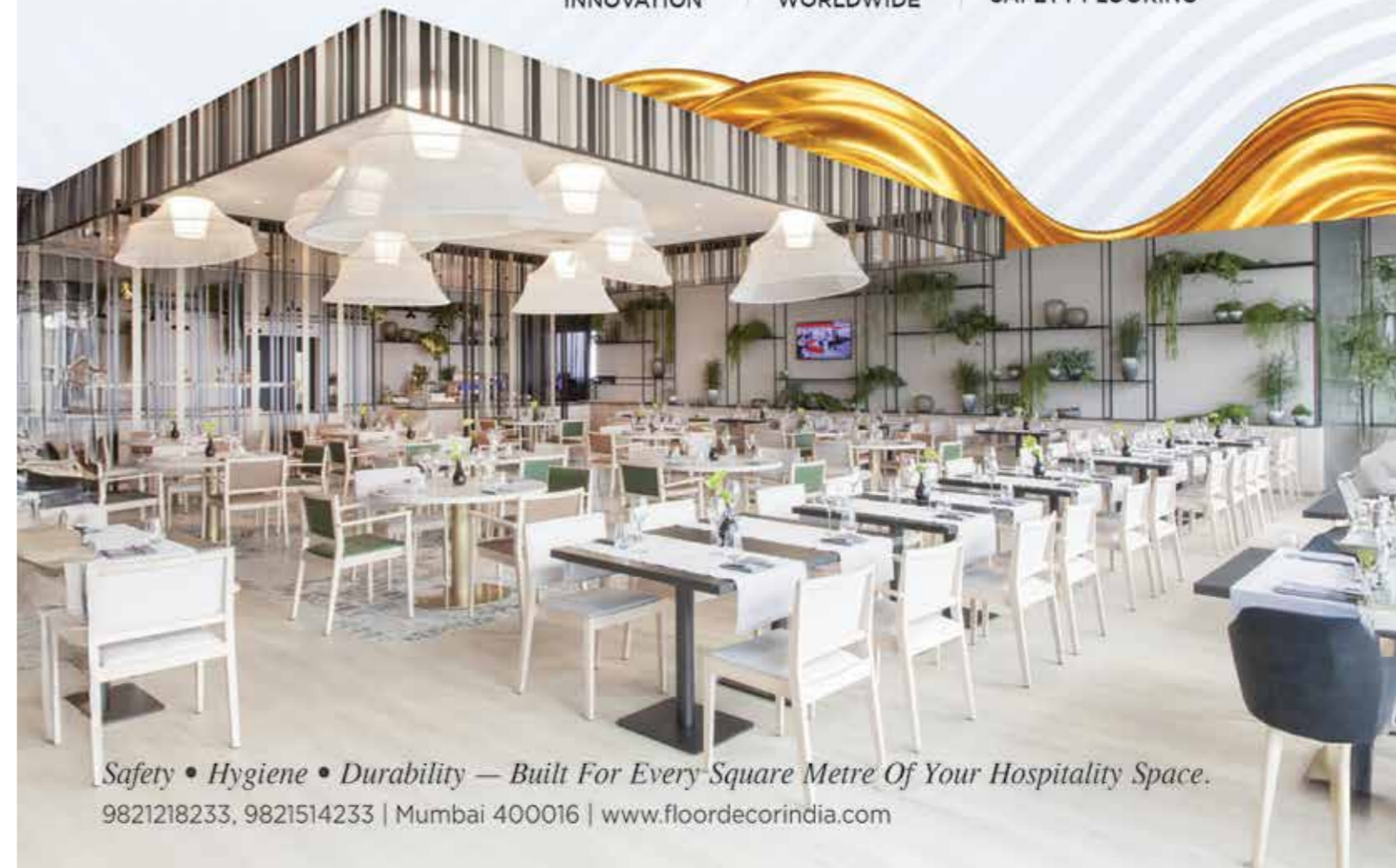


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Anantara one bedroom terrace suite - living room

follow your passion, never stop learning, and surround yourself with people who are better than you. Hospitality rewards curiosity, humility, and adaptability, so staying agile is essential. It also offers a broad range of opportunities across disciplines, brands, and geographies, with the added benefit of experiencing diverse cultures first-hand. When those realities are clearly communicated and supported, the industry becomes inherently compelling for the next generation.

Q. At a time when hospitality is navigating the growing influence of AI and automation, potentially reshaping the role of human talent, while also being tasked with building a more sustainable industry for future generations, how do you see the sector balancing efficiency with empathy, and growth with responsibility?

A. The balance starts with being clear about what technology should change and what it should

not. AI can improve discovery, efficiency, and personalisation, and remove friction from the guest journey, but it should never replace the human connection at the heart of hospitality. In addition, automation frees teams to focus more on warmth, intuition, and problem-solving.

The same principle applies to sustainability — growth must be intentional, grounded in the right partnerships, respect for place, and long-term responsibility rather than short-term gains. **HT**



Anantara Jewel Bagh Jaipur Hotel

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From supply gap to a **goldmine**

India's branded hotel inventory is just 300,000 rooms versus 5 million in the US and 3 million in China, a deficit **Rajeev Menon** calls a 'decade-long growth story'.



WORDS BY HT BUREAU

Marriott is expanding its presence in Aerocity as one of its highest-yield urban clusters, with a clear focus on adding room inventory and capturing sustained airport-driven demand. Speaking at an event in the capital, **Rajeev Menon**, President, Asia Pacific excluding China, Marriott International Inc., said, "Aerocity is a very strategic market for us, and we are going to continue to add more rooms in the coming years, because this is where business, both international and domestic, is only going to grow."



Rajeev Menon
President
Asia Pacific excluding China
Marriott International Inc.

For Marriott, the logic is straightforward — proximity to the airport drives high-yield transient business, while the clustering of hotels creates a self-sustaining ecosystem of conferences, airline crews, and global corporate traffic. "With over 2,000 rooms just in Aerocity and Gurgaon, we can create scale, and with scale comes both business opportunity and the ability to build careers," he added. But Menon is looking beyond the current footprint. "We are going to continue to add more rooms in the coming years," he said, hinting at an expansion pipeline that mirrors the broader growth story of hospitality in India.

Globally, Marriott is approaching two milestones — its 100th year and the opening of its 10,000th hotel. In India, it is already the largest hotel operator, with over two hundred properties and a comparable number under development. Aerocity, in that sense, is not an isolated bet; it is part of a larger strategy to concentrate inventory in high-demand urban corridors.

But Menon's emphasis, even in business terms, returns quickly to people. "Every single year, I am going to do a review," he said, referring not just to financial performance but to talent development tied to these assets. The expansion

"Aerocity is a very strategic market for us, and we are going to continue to add more rooms in the coming years."

is designed to do two things simultaneously — capture demand and create a pipeline of trained professionals who can move through Marriott's global system.

This expansion comes at a particular moment. Globally, Marriott approaches its centenary; in India, it stands at the forefront of a market that is still, by comparison, underbuilt. "The US has five million hotel rooms. China has three million. India has barely 300,000 as part of branded inventory," Menon underlined. The gap, in his observation, is not a deficit but a horizon. "This part of the world represents a decade-long growth story," he noted. **HT**

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Domestic demand steadies the ship

Amid global travel uncertainty, domestic demand is emerging as a key stabiliser for India's hospitality sector, notes **KB Kachru**.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

As geopolitical tensions continue to impact global travel, the hospitality sector is navigating a phase marked by uncertainty as well as emerging opportunities. **KB Kachru**, Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, Radisson Hotel Group – South Asia, said, “Given that parts of the Middle East and West Asia are major hubs of aviation, the geopolitical tensions and related airspace restrictions naturally impact travel sentiment, especially international travel.”

He further highlighted that while travel has become longer due to changes in routes, it has also become more expensive, further compounded by rising fuel costs. Travel confidence has fallen due to safety concerns and uncertainty.

However, India has remained relatively insulated. “As far as India is concerned, due to the timely

intervention of the government with respect to the supply of LPG to hotels and ATF costs, the tourism and hospitality industry fared comparatively better. The period is not traditionally the peak inbound tourism season for India,” he underlined.

Hospitality's anchor

Kachru emphasised that India's post-pandemic recovery has been largely driven by domestic demand. He explained, “Post-COVID-19, the sector has recovered and flourished largely on the strength of domestic demand, leisure/ business and MICE, especially weddings, as inbound growth has been sluggish. With the Middle East not being on the radar in the near future for tourism and MICE, the demand is likely to shift to other countries. India can benefit considering recent investments in infrastructure development, especially improved connectivity and MICE infrastructure.”



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



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Weddings and business travel segments are helping offset weaker international arrivals, as hotels focus on maximising demand rather than cutting prices

Despite a ceasefire being announced, immediate sentiment recovery remains unlikely. He further added, “A ceasefire has been announced, but it is unlikely to affect travel sentiment immediately, and travel will remain restricted to essential and unavoidable travel. While international corridors remain unstable, domestic travel demand is likely to stay relatively resilient, supported by government measures and a stable fuel supply to sustain the sector through the crisis.”

Shifting sources of demand
With international travel severely disrupted, the sector is increasingly pivoting towards domestic and regional markets. “With international travel largely disrupted due to the conflict, hospitality demand is expected to largely pivot towards domestic or regional markets. The sharp

decline in international travellers indicates a significant demand gap in the market,” he opined.

To address this, hotels are deepening engagement with local audiences. He said, “Hotels are expected to further their engagement with locally sourced audiences through activities like staycations or cultural events. Strengthening this local community connection is already emerging as a vital strategy for both short-term recovery and long-term prosperity.”

At the same time, key segments continue to provide support. He emphasised, “Additionally, segments like weddings or business travel could temporarily help offset the decline in international arrivals, especially since the industry is focusing more on optimising available demand rather than aggressively competing on price.”

Opportunities amid disruption
Pointing to emerging opportunities

within the disruption, Kachru highlighted, “A key offset will also come from Indian outbound travellers, who may increasingly choose domestic destinations over international ones in the near term. At the same time, India stands to benefit as competing destinations in parts of the Middle East and West Asia may take more longer to recover and rebuild the confidence of travellers, particularly across MICE and leisure segments.”

He added that short-term demand triggers could further support the sector. “Additionally, the ongoing IPL season is expected to generate a meaningful wave of inbound tourism, with fans travelling across host cities driving notable upticks in hotel occupancy, F&B revenues, and ancillary spend. This presents a timely opportunity for hoteliers in IPL venue cities to capitalise on short-burst demand,” he emphasised. **HT**

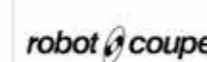


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Will disruption pause or propel demand?

With no clear timeline for normalcy, could this uncertainty dampen travel demand? As **Manav Thadani** observes, the real question is how the market adapts in the interim.



WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

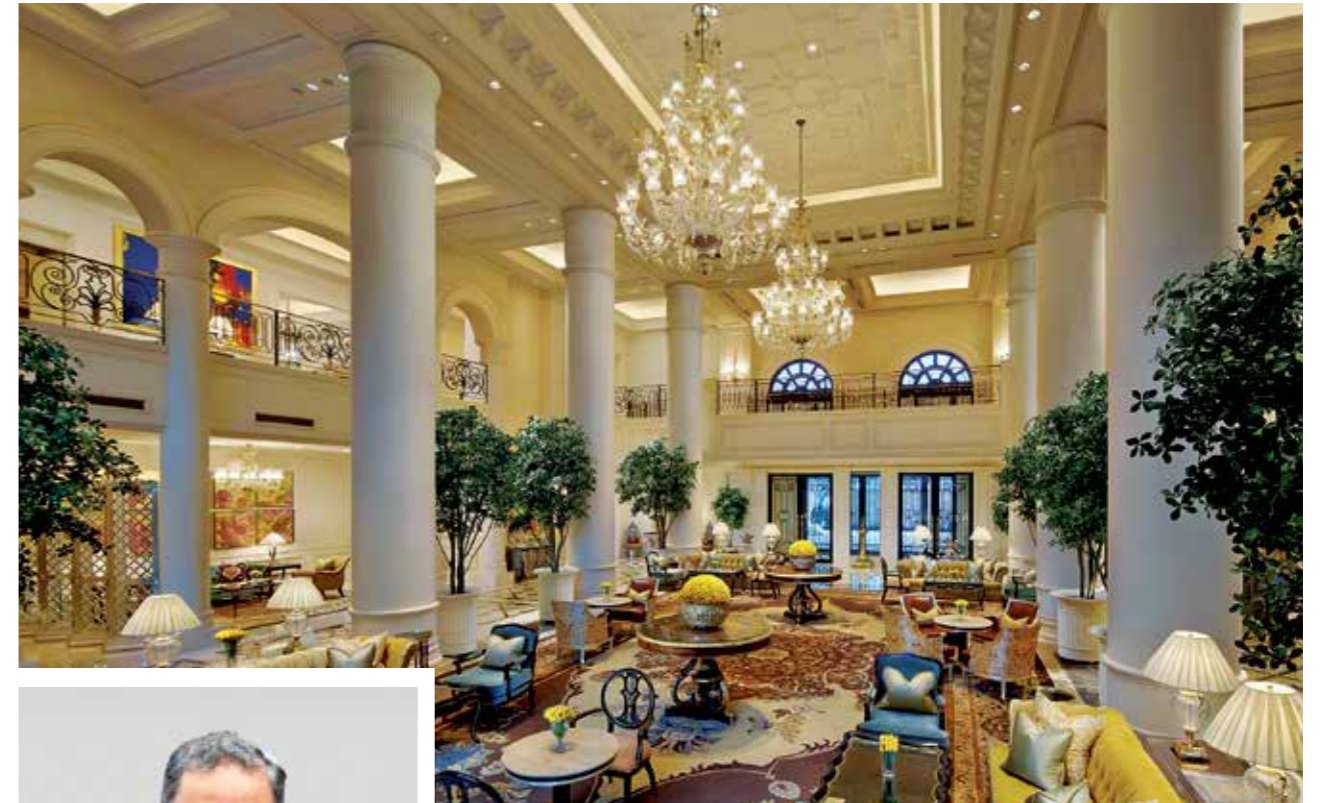
Q: With the Middle East crisis and ongoing travel restrictions, how do you see these factors impacting overall travel sentiment this year?

A. I think there are a couple of things to consider. One is the broader international context, particularly markets like the UK, where performance has been evolving and certain agreements are coming into place. On the other hand, there could be some delays in campaigns, as training, acquisitions, and material movements are being routed back to India, leading to a certain degree of displacement.

Could something like that impact demand? The answer is not significantly. In the near term, there could be a slight decline for a few months.

Q: When we talk about key trends in sources of business, what shifts do you see that might compensate for the loss in international travel, or any segment that has sustained regardless of the situation?

A. Look, I go back to my 25 years of experience in guiding the market. Every time we have faced disruptions, whether it was in 2001 because of the Iran-Iraq war or during COVID-19 when people were forced to stay within India, the market has adapted. What that experience did was create a much more robust base. For me, that



Manav Thadani
Founder Chairman
Hotelivate

“We have a relatively robust economy where people continue to earn and have enough income to sustain travel demand.”

continues to hold. Most people are still going to travel — whether it is because of high air travel costs or disruptions in certain regions. What it has essentially done is reinforce consumer demand.

Q. Would you believe that this is the tipping point for tourism as a whole and is there an opportunity that you see here that could position India as a safe travel destination?

A. I think what we have here is a strong domestic tourism base. We also have a relatively robust economy where people continue to earn and have enough income to sustain travel demand. That, in itself, keeps the market active.

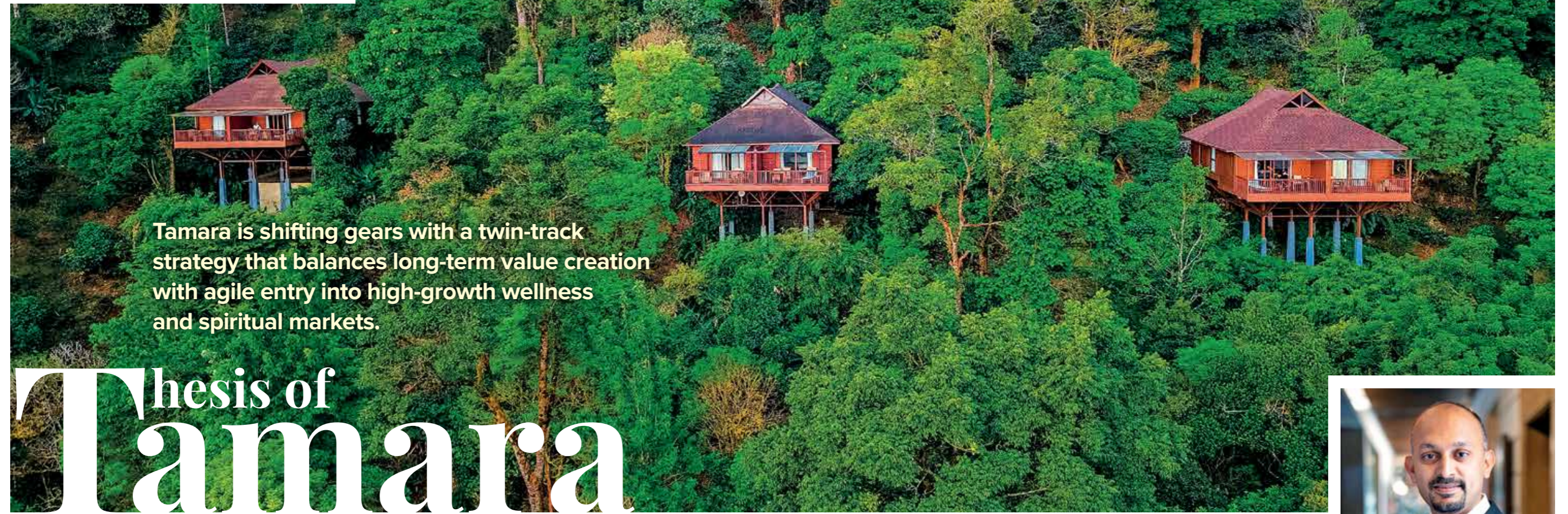
At the same time, in India, a lot of travel is linked to social and cultural factors — weddings, family events, and so on, which are largely pre-planned and tend to continue regardless of external disruptions. Whether it is luxury, leisure, or weddings, there is already strong demand in the system. Now, the uncertainty comes from the external environment. But the key question is how the market

adapts in the interim. Since no one knows how long the situation will last, there is a tendency to look closer home rather than commit to international destination. It becomes a question of finding viable alternatives within the domestic market.

Q. Are we looking at a temporary disruption, or a reset in how and where people choose to travel?

A. You can say that certain changes start off as temporary but become permanent if they last long enough. For instance, during the pandemic, people realised that the road network was much better, and that shift towards road travel became more permanent.

People may go back to their normal patterns, but if the current situation does not resolve in the next couple of weeks, which I do not think it will, given the political posturing, then it becomes a concern. At the same time, it is not just a problem, it could also be an opportunity. Certain trends that shift in India’s favour during this period could become more permanent over time. **HT**



Tamara is shifting gears with a twin-track strategy that balances long-term value creation with agile entry into high-growth wellness and spiritual markets.

Thesis of Tamara

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

Q. What core strategy underpins your diversified 2030 expansion across multiple hospitality formats? What will define success for Tamara Leisure Experiences over the next 3–5 years?

A. At Tamara, our growth is a deliberate extension of how travel demand is evolving and how we

have built the brand over the years. We started with a clear purpose of responsible hospitality, and that continues to guide every decision, from location selection and design to day-to-day operations.

Across formats, whether eco-resorts, wellness stays, or urban hospitality, our approach remains consistent — minimising ecological impact, integrating with local communities, and embedding a

strong wellness lens into the guest experience. At the same time, our investments in a robust digital backbone and operating systems allow us to deliver consistency and personalisation as we scale, without diluting the brand. Over the next 3–5 years, success for us will be defined by strong performance across both existing and new properties amid rising domestic travel demand, and healthy

Over time, we see an approximate 50:50 mix of owned and managed properties, combining control with scalability



Samir MC
CEO, Tamara Leisure Experiences



operating margins supported by improving infrastructure and demand depth. More importantly, it will be about building long-term brand equity, not just expanding our footprint, and ensuring we can sustain performance across cycles, backed by a diversified demand base and evolving travel patterns.

Q. With a mix of owned investments and your first asset-light deal in Kufri, how do you see your development model evolving? Going forward, what will be the ideal balance between owned assets and management contracts?

A. Our growth so far has been anchored in owned investments, which has allowed us to build a strong and consistent operating foundation. At the core of this is a well-defined system shaped by three key pillars — sustainability, technology, and wellness, which help us stay consistent in how we design our spaces, deliver the guest experience, and uphold our philosophy of responsible hospitality across properties. This strong foundation now gives us the confidence to expand our portfolio through a calibrated mix of capital-heavy and capital-light models. As we scale, we are now complementing this with an asset-light approach, starting with our first signing in Kufri. Owned assets

We have built capabilities in the corporate & MICE segment through our O by Tamara hotels in Thiruvananthapuram & Coimbatore

will continue to anchor long-term value creation in high-intent destinations, while asset-light expansion allows us to enter growth markets supported by improving connectivity and infrastructure. This creates a more balanced and disciplined growth model, giving us the flexibility to navigate demand variability. Over time, we see this evolving into an approximate 50:50 mix of owned and managed properties, combining control with scalability.

Rising domestic travel demand, supported by improving connectivity, is making destinations more accessible and viable across seasons. We approach every new property with a long-term lens, focusing on locations that can sustain demand over time. A diversified portfolio and a calibrated expansion strategy help us grow thoughtfully while staying aligned with evolving travel patterns.

Q. Traditionally known for experiential leisure, how

are you positioning Tamara Leisure Experiences to attract corporate and MICE business?

A. At Tamara, our approach to the corporate and MICE segment is rooted in responsible hospitality and the belief that every stay should translate into a memorable experience, delivered with a sense of quiet luxury. While we are known for our experiential leisure through our Tamara Resorts in Coorg and Kodaikanal, at the same time, we have also consciously built capabilities in the corporate and MICE segment through our upscale hotels under the O by Tamara brand in Thiruvananthapuram and Coimbatore.

Our positioning here is not to compete purely on scale, but to extend this philosophy into the business travel space. What we are seeing today is that even corporate and MICE travellers are looking beyond just a venue; they are seeking more curated, end-to-end experiences. That is how we are approaching this segment. Whether



As we scale, we are now complementing this with an asset-light approach, starting with our first signing in Kufri

it is through well-designed spaces, integrating wellness into the overall offering, or enabling seamless experiences through technology, we are building a more thoughtful MICE ecosystem. Even in our newer and upcoming formats, the idea is to create a space where guests can rely on us to deliver the entire experience, not just the infrastructure. So, for us, MICE is not a volume-led play; it is about creating differentiated, experience-driven engagements, anchored in responsible hospitality and designed to leave a lasting impression.

Q. How are tier II and offbeat destinations evolving in terms of both demand and investor interest?

A. If we look at how demand is

evolving, there is clearly strong structural growth beyond the top cities. With significant improvements in road connectivity, rail networks, and airports, travel has become far more accessible, and we are seeing increasing movement into tier II, tier III, and emerging destinations.

Two clear trends stand out. One is the rise of experiential travel, people are looking to explore places beyond the traditional hotspots, and more broadly across regions like the North East, including destinations such as Kaziranga, where footfalls are steadily increasing. The second is the growth of faith and spiritual travel, which we believe is becoming a category in itself. We are already seeing this in locations like Guruvayur and Kumbakonam.

From an investor standpoint, there is also growing interest in these markets. As demand expands and supply still remains limited, these destinations offer a strong opportunity to build quality hospitality assets. For us, these locations align very well with our approach, as they allow us to create differentiated, experience-led offerings while staying true to our philosophy.

Q. How do you assess the current trajectory of India's leisure hospitality market, particularly in experiential and wellness-led destinations?



The market is seeing a clear shift from opulence-led stays to more immersive, experience-driven travel. With India already nearing 3 billion visits and projected to reach 5.2 billion by 2030, the opportunity is significant, driven by travellers seeking deeper connections with nature, culture, and themselves. Alongside this, wellness is steadily moving from a niche consideration to a more mainstream influence in how people choose and experience destinations. For us, this shift is deeply anchored in Amal Tamara, our NABH-certified Ayurveda hospital in the state of Kerala, which forms the cornerstone of our wellness philosophy.

Wellness at Tamara is not confined to a single destination but is thoughtfully integrated into the guest experience across properties. From the presence of Ayurvedic doctors to curated menus aligned with wellness needs, to experiences that encourage balance, rest, and mindfulness, wellness becomes an enabling layer within the overall stay rather than a standalone offering. Amal Tamara, in this sense, acts as both a centre of excellence and a guiding framework that informs how we deliver consistent, meaningful wellness experiences across all segments. **HT**



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A mosaic of possibilities

Every year, Leela Mosaic brings partners and hotel leadership together in one space, giving a first-hand view of each hotel's unique destination story.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts successfully concluded the third edition of The Leela Mosaic, its flagship trade and sales showcase that brings together the brand's distinctive portfolio and immersive experiences for key partners and stakeholders. This year, the multi-city showcase travelled across six key cities —Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi, and

Gurugram. The edition also featured an exclusive preview of The Leela Coorg Forest Sanctuary, the brand's newest upcoming destination.

Driving collaborations

Rooted in storytelling and experiential luxury, the showcase draws inspiration from its namesake (Mosaic), bringing together distinct elements to create a unified narrative. In this case, it reflects how individual properties, each with their own identity, collectively contribute

to the brand's overarching philosophy of Indian luxury and hospitality. Speaking at the event, **Megha Ajgaonkar**, Vice President Sales, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts said, "Mosaic was initiated as a platform to bring together the unique strengths of each of our hotels under one cohesive narrative. Much like a mosaic, where different elements come together to create something meaningful, this platform allows our senior leadership to directly



We pride ourselves most on creating experiences for our guests

engage with our partners, showcase their individual propositions and build stronger relationships. It is an important enabler for our growth, as it helps align our partners with the distinctive experiences each Leela property offers."

The Leela Mosaic 2026 served as a meaningful platform to deepen engagement with valued corporate and leisure partners, alongside event and celebration planners, fostering enduring relationships, shared growth, and a collective vision for the future of Indian luxury hospitality. "This year's edition was particularly significant as the group marked 40 years since the opening of The Leela Mumbai in 1986," shared Ajgaonkar. As the brand continues to expand, Leela Mosaic remains a key platform, strengthening its network while bringing together



Megha Ajgaonkar
Vice President, Sales
The Leela Palaces,
Hotels and Resorts

the many facets of its portfolio into one cohesive experience.

Exclusivity over volume

The ongoing Middle East crisis is influencing the global wedding calendar, particularly the winter

wedding season, with increasing uncertainty around travel, flight limitations, and rising airfares prompting many families to reconsider overseas celebrations. When asked if this would lead to a price surge in the domestic market and make weddings costlier, Ajgaonkar said, "Even if the quantum increases, our conversions have always been in the early single digits, because as a brand we have been selective about them as well. While we have seen queries come through, we are already on the upper strata of how we position ourselves, simply because we operate in the luxury space."

Ajgaonkar noted that the shift in demand may be distributed across different tiers of hospitality in India. "Possibly, different strata of hotels might start to see different businesses. For example, a wedding that could





The Leela Ambience Gurugram

have happened at the Palm Beach in Dubai could be a business that a client would start looking at luxury brands in India for. And something which was happening at a Sheikh Zayed Road could also move to lifestyle-led hotels in India.” However, she underlined that for the brand itself, the overall impact may remain limited due to its selective approach.

She further highlighted that some impact can be seen on overall demand patterns, especially in certain segments of business travel. “The bigger hurt for us has been on the corporate side, primarily because of not just fuel surcharges, but also a lot of

One cohesive narrative unites the unique strengths of each hotel under Mosaic

international guests, especially from the US markets, whose flight routes were via the Middle East. So, the overall pace of business has slowed down,” she underlined.

However, the good news is that there has been no impact on domestic travel. “While we do have a few hotels that see a significant influx of international business travellers, and those

businesses are being impacted, we are compensating as much as we can with domestic-driven business travel. All our other hotels have largely always enjoyed a strong share of Indian consumer business, and that has not been affected in any manner,” she stated.

Quintessential luxury
Ajgaonkar underlined a clear brand philosophy that places luxury positioning and guest experience above scale or volume. The core focus of the brand remains on building meaningful guest experiences across different travel purposes. She highlighted, “What we pride ourselves on the most is building experiences for our guests. Guests could come for leisure, weddings, family gatherings, or birthday celebrations.”

While such occasions contribute to business revenue, Ajgaonkar stressed that the emphasis remains firmly on experience-led luxury, particularly in leisure properties. **HT**

The Leela Palace Udaipur's lakeside outer courtyard against Lake Pichola



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Luxury inspired by Maldivian local identity



Breaking away from standardised luxury & opulence, Noku Maldives is recalibrating its positioning with a focus on culturally grounded, experience-led hospitality.

WORDS BY RAHUL BHADANA

Noku Maldives, the 50-villa resort, underwent a year-long upgrade of its accommodation, public areas, and service infrastructure, alongside adjustments to its commercial and operational approach. The transition focused on aligning the physical renovations with changing guest expectations, while strengthening internal systems and market responsiveness to shifting market dynamics.

Hussain Shahid, General Manager, Noku Maldives, Vignette Collection, said that the repositioning of the resort was not limited to infrastructure. “We joined at a pivotal moment, with a full refurbishment of villas and public areas, while rebuilding trade partnerships, strengthening sales



Hussain Shahid
General Manager
Noku Maldives

representation, and enhancing our digital presence,” he shared.

Cultural context in design
The resort’s architecture strategy centres on spatial design and scale, with villas starting at 175 square metres across a 50 key inventory.

The resort aims to strengthen its luxury segment through consistent, experience driven offerings

This format fosters operational flexibility in delivering personalised service and maintaining a controlled guest environment.

Coupled with this are the resort’s natural assets, including a house reef, access to over 20 dive sites, and uninterrupted beachfront, which continue to play a defining role in the guest



experience. These are further complemented by integrating local context into the stay.

“Rather than delivering a generic luxury product, we are focused on authentic Maldivian storytelling through experiences such as cultural nights, interactions with fishermen, and local design elements,” Shahid said.

Market scenario

Currently, the resort’s strongest source markets are Russia and the CIS countries, followed by



China and Europe, including the UK and other DACH — Deutschland (Germany), Austria, and Confoederatio Helvetica (Switzerland).

“India is among the top source markets for Maldives, and we are building visibility through PR, digital outreach, and participation in trade events, alongside strengthening partnerships,” Shahid said.

Go-to-market strategy

Post-refurbishment, the focus has shifted towards strengthening alignment between product, sales,

and distribution. Familiarisation trips, updated content assets, and expanded sales representation form part of this approach. Shahid explained, “Providing first-hand experience through familiarisation trips is crucial to building confidence and enabling partners to sell effectively.”

Looking ahead, the resort’s strategy remains centred on refining its market mix, strengthening brand visibility, and reinforcing its positioning within a competitive luxury landscape through consistent, experience-driven delivery. **HT**

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A celebration of talent & achievements

IHM Pusa commemorated its annual day with cultural performances and an award ceremony, with a renewed focus on strengthening hospitality education.

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

The 62th Annual Day of the Institute of Hotel Management, Catering & Nutrition, Pusa (IHM Pusa), New Delhi, titled 'Anuvartan', was celebrated at the campus with great enthusiasm and grandeur. At the event, the institute highlighted its academic excellence, student accomplishments, and strong linkages with the global hospitality industry.

The event was graced by distinguished alumni and industry leaders. **Rajeev Menon**, President, Asia Pacific (excluding China), Marriott International, attended as the

Chief Guest. **Dr Sanjay Sethi**, Director, Board of Chalet Hotels, was the Guest of Honour.

Mandeep Singh Lamba, President & CEO (South Asia), HVS Anarock, and **Dr Poonam Verma**, Principal, Shaheed Sukhdev College of Business Studies, joined as industry and academic experts respectively.

A key highlight of the event was the address by the Secretary (Tourism), Government of India, and Chairman of IHM Pusa. The Secretary delivered the vote of thanks and acknowledged the efforts of students, faculty, and staff. He also said that he considered himself a host rather than a guest, reinforcing

The award ceremony honoured academics and extracurricular excellence among the graduating batch



the sense of community within the institution.

The event also saw the release of the institute's annual magazine, 'Abhivyakti', along with volume 12 of the Pusa Journal of Hospitality and Applied Sciences. **Kamal**

Kant Pant, Principal, IHM Pusa, presented the annual report, underscoring the institute's continued leadership in hospitality education and its contribution to the broader vision of strengthening India's tourism economy.

The celebration concluded with a vibrant cultural programme performed by students and an award ceremony recognising excellence in academics and extracurricular activities among the graduating batch. **HT**

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Sahara Star: A destination within a destination



Abandoning rigid conventional setups, Sahara Star serves as a one-stop destination for MICE & weddings, where each venue exudes a unique character through immersive and multi-sensory environments.

In the vibrant, ever-moving city of Mumbai, where luxury hospitality is constantly evolving, Sahara Star stands as a landmark that has redefined how the city celebrates—be it high-powered corporate gatherings or once-in-a-lifetime weddings.

Strategically located just minutes from the airport, Sahara Star offers a rare proposition — a fully integrated destination where every event, every guest, and every experience comes together seamlessly under one roof.

A blend of scale & versatility

At the heart of Sahara Star’s offering lies a carefully curated portfolio of banquet spaces, each designed to host a different scale

and style of celebration.

Sapphire Ballroom: The newly transformed ballroom is the epitome of grandeur. It is one of the largest pillarless banquet halls in Mumbai, marking a bold step forward in redefining how the city hosts large-scale events, weddings, and corporate gatherings.

Spanning across an expansive 55,000 sq ft, it is designed to host up to 2,500 guests, making it a landmark venue for large-scale weddings and receptions, high-profile conferences and exhibitions, and grand social celebrations.

Its expansive, unobstructed layout allows for spectacular décor transformations and immersive experiences, making it a preferred choice for those who



Romie Dutt
Executive Director
Aamby Valley City and
Hotel Sahara Star

envision weddings at a truly iconic scale. Weddings at this level of grandeur typically commence from approximately ₹50 lakh onwards, depending on customisation, décor, and culinary selections. **Jade & Ruby:** These two iconic banquets, complementing the Sapphire Ballroom, are the perfect balance of scale and intimacy that caters to mid-to-large gatherings. With capacities of 700 to 800 guests, these venues are ideal for wedding functions, corporate conferences, and social events.

They offer the flexibility to host celebrations that are grand yet personal, with weddings in these spaces starting from approximately ₹28 lakh onwards, allowing clients to design experiences aligned with both vision and budget.



“We offer multiple venues within one destination, allowing each function to have its own identity.”

Experiential wedding settings

What truly sets Sahara Star apart is its ability to go beyond conventional banquet spaces and offer immersive, experiential venues within the hotel itself.

At the heart of the hotel lies the breathtaking Central Courtyard, overlooking the iconic lagoon. This space creates a larger-than-life, destination-like ambiance within the city, making it ideal for wedding ceremonies under a grand canopy and reception setups with a scenic backdrop.

For those seeking an alfresco vibe, the poolside steps provide the perfect setting. It is ideal for mehendi ceremonies, cocktail evenings, and intimate pre-wedding functions. This venue blends open-air charm with five-star luxury. “Every wedding today is a series of experiences, not just a single event. At Sahara Star, we offer multiple venues within one destination, allowing each function to have its own identity while remaining seamlessly connected,” said **Romie Dutt**, Executive Director, Hotel Sahara Star.

A testament to innovation

Taking innovation a step further, Sahara Star has introduced a complete simulated wedding

environment — a pioneering concept in urban hospitality. This immersive experience allows families to walk through actual décor setups and experience buffet arrangements and menu presentations. It also enables them to explore table settings, cutlery, and themes and visualise and customise their wedding in real time.

“We wanted our guests to move beyond imagination and into experience. This simulation allows them to see, feel, and perfect every detail before their big day,” explained Dutt.

Unique destination experiences

In a landscape where destination weddings often require travel, Sahara Star offers something unique — a destination experience within Mumbai itself. It seamlessly brings together accessibility, scale, customisation, and innovation.

“Our vision is to position Sahara Star as a destination in itself, where every event becomes an experience, and every experience becomes a memory,” stressed Dutt. **HT**

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Visit us at www.saharastar.com

IHE 9th edition set for 5–8 Aug

IHE 2026, to be held in Greater Noida, remains a strategic platform for brands to build visibility & forge strong partnerships.



WORDS BY HT BUREAU

India International Hospitality Expo (IHE) 2026 was officially launched at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, during the First Look Evening and Leadership Circle Introduction event. The event marked the start of the ninth edition, bringing together eminent dignitaries and industry leaders from across the industry.

One-stop platform

IHE has grown into a trusted sourcing destination for the hospitality sector. Over the years, the expo has brought together hotels, resorts, restaurants and other foodservice professionals on a single platform for focused business engagement.

In his welcoming address, **Sudeep Sarcar**, CEO, IEML, welcomed the eminent dignitaries present at the launch, noting that their presence added depth, credibility, and a strong sense of purpose to the occasion, while reinforcing the importance of a platform like IHE for the hospitality industry. HORECA leaders were also felicitated,



Rakesh Kumar
Chairman
India Exposition Mart Ltd

acknowledging their contribution to the industry growth.

Scheduled from 5 to 8 August 2026 at India Expo Centre and Mart, Greater Noida, Delhi NCR, the event will present a comprehensive range of product zones covering architecture, construction, furniture, fixtures and equipment, operating supplies and equipment, and more.

Bridging the gap

The expo is designed to serve the needs of hospitality and F&B professionals who are actively looking for products, solutions, and business partnerships. It offers a structured environment

where exhibitors can connect directly with hotel owners, general managers, procurement heads, executive chefs, F&B directors, and restaurant and café owners.

Engagement strategies

With a strong mix of structured B2B interactions, culinary masterclasses, competitions, awards, and knowledge-led sessions, IHE 2026 will create a business-focused environment for meaningful conversations and long-term collaborations. Madhumandapam is being introduced as a new, well-curated segment at IHE in association with SPIRITZ, offering a focused space for showcasing premium concepts and industry-led experiences.

Positive expectations

IHE 2026 is expected to bring together over 1,000 brands from across India and global markets, with participation from more than 16 countries. The show will welcome over 25,000 trade visitors, including 500+ hosted VIP buyers, creating a focused environment for sourcing, and partnerships across the hospitality and foodservice industry. **HT**



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INSP20D	230VAC 50HZ	500	296x370x75mm	Inbuilt	275x350mm	Inbuilt	4.5Kg
INS2BRA	230VAC 50HZ	1000	800X400X100mm	Inbuilt	787X387mm	Inbuilt	9.700Kg
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Innovation rooted in sustainability

Rejecting a one-size-fits-all strategy, Chefmate adopts a hyperlocalised approach to global technology to align with local operating realities.



WORDS BY HT BUREAU

Next-generation kitchen ventilation systems are revolutionising hotel operations by significantly reducing energy consumption and improving sustainability outcomes compared to traditional exhaust solutions. Chefmate Technologies continues to lead this change through the hyperlocalisation of global technology and innovation.

PA Prabhu, Director, Chefmate Technologies, said, “The new HoodSense technology, which works on demand-controlled kitchen ventilation, helps the industry by optimising the performance of the ventilation system by regulating the airflow based on the cooking operations underneath the hood.”

Extra edge

The company has been one of the pioneers in developing an indigenous UV filtration system

In collaboration with research institutions, Chefmate is hyperlocalising ventilation standards

designed to improve both filtration and air quality at the discharge of air into the atmosphere. This solution plays a critical role in the hospitality industry, drastically reducing outdoor air pollution, contamination, and odour.

With the UV filtration system in place, he assured that the need for cleaning and maintenance of the exhaust systems is negligible.

Next move

With an aim to redefine Indian hospitality standards, the



PA Prabhu
Director
Chefmate Technologies

company will focus on next-gen ventilation solutions that prioritise superior air quality, certified fire protection, and energy efficiency. Prabhu noted, “By collaborating with academic and research institutions, Chefmate is further advancing the industry through the hyperlocalisation of ventilation standards, ensuring sustainable and resilient kitchen space tailored to the Indian landscape.” HT



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Winter wedding calendar shifts homeward

Arjun Baljee believes external disruptions are creating a timely window for domestic hospitality to accelerate India's positioning in the luxury and experiential space.



WORDS BY HT BUREAU

With global uncertainties influencing international travel movement, the immediate impact is beginning to show across India's hospitality calendar, and most notably in the upcoming summer travel season and winter wedding bookings. According to **Arjun Baljee**, Founder of ICONIQA and President of Royal Orchid Hotels Ltd, the shift is already visible on the ground, with families and travellers recalibrating plans in response to uncertainty, airspace restrictions, and rising travel costs.

International celebrations, which once drew significant interest, are now being reconsidered in favour of locations that are easier to execute. "With the current geopolitical uncertainty, families are moving towards destinations that are easier to plan. For the upcoming winter season, there has been a rise in



Arjun Baljee, Founder
ICONIQA, and President
Royal Orchid Hotels Ltd

inquiries for domestic destination weddings, particularly across heritage hotels, palaces, and experiential resorts," said Baljee.

While the geography is changing, expectations remain intact, he added, "The expectation continues to be about delivering a well-planned event that stands out as a differentiated experience. India today has the infrastructure and diversity to support this."

When international travel becomes more complex or time-consuming, travellers search for options that are closer and more reliable. Airfares remain a key variable. "Airfare too would be a determinant, and a sharp increase can influence decisions. However, for a large segment of travellers, especially in the premium category, factors like convenience, safety, and overall experience take precedence," he noted.

While the current environment is driven by external disruptions, it is also creating a window for

"The opportunity is to build a strong narrative around India as a primary destination rather than an alternative."

domestic hospitality to capture demand. Baljee believes this moment could accelerate India's positioning in the luxury and experiential segment." However, he underscored that consistency will be key. "The opportunity is to deliver this at a global standard and build a strong narrative around India as a primary destination rather than an alternative," he reminded. **HT**

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Redefining **sustainable kitchen** innovation

Smart and sustainable kitchens not only outweigh upfront investments but also yield long-term operational gains, paving a path towards business profitability.

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

Incorporating sustainability often raises the question, “Is the investment worth the risk?” With a strategic approach, hotel owners must prioritise sustainability by considering its long-term operational savings and return on investment (ROI). For Fagor Professional, sustainability needs to be practical, with a focus on equipment that reduces day-to-day operating costs through lower energy, water, and maintenance consumption.

While the initial investment may be higher, the savings are immediate and continuous. Therefore, hoteliers must consider a complete professional kitchen solution to reap long-term value.

Guests today are increasingly conscious of how hotels operate behind the scenes. This is influencing the way solutions are developed, with a stronger focus on the responsible use of resources. Fagor’s goal is to support operators in delivering high-

quality experiences while keeping operations efficient and mindful.

Product innovation

Innovation at Fagor Professional is centred on control and precision. Modern kitchen solutions are designed to use only what is necessary in terms of energy, water, and time. This helps reduce waste while maintaining performance. The result is a kitchen that runs more efficiently without adding complexity to operations.

With platforms such as MyFagor and FagorKonnnect, operators can monitor performance and access key data in real time. This allows them to understand usage, make adjustments, and improve efficiency over time, making sustainability visible and manageable.

Significance of integration

For Fagor Professional, integration is essential to creating a truly sustainable and efficient hotel

A 360° complete kitchen solution enables seamless workflows, better control of resources, and minimal waste

ecosystem. A 360° complete kitchen solution ensures that all kitchen areas work together in a coordinated manner. This improves workflow, reduces waste, and allows better control of resources. When all elements are aligned, operations can become more seamless and efficient, and sustainability becomes part of the everyday process. **HT**



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Innovation steering India's growth story

At AAHAR 2026, sustainability, automation, and localisation emerged as hospitality's next growth catalysts amid hotel expansion into emerging markets.

WORDS BY RAHUL BHADANA

Ground Floor
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Refrigeration

First Floor
Hospitality & Decor,
Housekeeping Product
Gift Items,
Software Solutions



Aman Goel
Business Head
- Hospitality
King Koil

The hospitality segment today requires a wide range of bedding solutions, catering to everything from budget hotels with 20–30 rooms to boutique and four-star properties. The portfolio includes multiple mattress options, such as the Maharaja range, which is designed for mid-scale and boutique hotels with a focus on delivering quality sleep within a mid-tier tariff bracket. Each product is aligned not only with the hotel category but also with the owner's vision for the property. From a technical perspective, the focus remains on in-house manufacturing, including spring systems and foam, ensuring durability and consistency. This enables us to offer mattresses designed to last up to 10 years. Construction standards are aligned with global benchmarks, supported by technology from King Koil US. ■



PA Prabhu
Director
Chefmate

We have been manufacturing kitchen hood for the past 25 years, focusing on kitchen exhaust systems and front cooking stations, all developed to global standards. We work closely with leading hotel brands such as Marriott, Taj, ITC, and The Leela, catering to their requirements on a regular basis. One of our recent innovations is the UV hood, developed to address the persistent challenge of grease entering ducts and creating fire hazards. With this technology, oil does not go beyond the hood, significantly enhancing safety, which is critical in hospitality environments. With the rapid growth of hotels across the country, demand for our products has increased substantially. Every hotel requires a kitchen, and today, kitchens and cafeterias have become major revenue generators, supported further by the rise in banqueting. ■



Debobrata Das
Country Manager (India)
Electrolux Professional

Our focus is on delivering comprehensive and future-ready solutions for the commercial foodservice, beverages, and laundry industry. Today, we cater to nearly 60 per cent of a commercial kitchen's requirements, spanning modular cooking, refrigeration, ovens, and warewashing equipment. Sustainability is becoming a defining factor for the industry, and we are committed to leading this shift through innovation. Our solutions are designed to optimise energy, water, and chemical consumption, enabling businesses to operate more efficiently while reducing their environmental footprint. Innovation remains at the core of our strategy. By investing over four per cent of our annual profits into research and development, we continue to introduce advanced solutions that align with evolving customer needs. ■



M Sathish Nair
CEO and Managing
Director
EssEmm Corporation

We are focused on industrial production machines, primarily catering to central kitchens, cloud kitchens, large factories, and industrial houses. We specialise in vegetable processing solutions, such as vegetable washers, cutting and dicing machines, along with pre-processing equipment including commercial grinders and pulverisers. In addition, we offer complete induction lines for griddles and wok fryers, as well as our core cooking equipment such as cookwoks and boiling kettles, ranging from 25–50 litres to as high as 800 litres in industrial production capacities. At this expo, we are showcasing our mini-series, as even large production kitchens require smaller batch processing, and this range is designed to fill that gap. Our equipment is ergonomic, and safety-oriented, ensuring food safety and compliance with international standards. ■



Karan Khanna
Director
Eclipse International
India

We are a US-based company and leaders in technology and innovation globally, with our brand holding around 19 patents. At the show, we are displaying a range of these patented products, including our latest launch introduced this year. This new technology is designed to support approximately 700 kilograms on a mattress without any slippage, and we are proud to bring this innovation to India within a month of its global launch. In addition, we have introduced three to four new products this year, including customised mattresses developed for brands such as IHG, Radisson, and Ramada. With India's hotel industry expanding rapidly, particularly into tier II and tier III cities, we are seeing increased demand across segments. This growth is creating opportunities for advanced, technology-driven sleep solutions in the market. ■



Vikram Khurana
CEO & Coffee
Consultant, **KAAPI**
Solutions

We are a one-stop solution provider for coffee technology, consultancy, and training, helping businesses set up profitable coffee operations. At the show, we are showcasing a wide range of brewing technologies, including semi-automatic and fully automatic machines, coffee roasters, grinders, and manual brewing systems for speciality coffee. One of our key highlights is the introduction of our first 'assembled in India' machines, developed in partnership with Astoria from Italy. We are also launching new ranges of auto steamers and automatic machines, bringing in a mix of price-sensitive and advanced technologies. This aligns with the broader push towards local manufacturing. With the growth of hotels across the country, demand for quality coffee solutions has also increased significantly. ■



We are showcasing our range at AAHAR under our brand 'So Sweet', which focuses on natural, zero-calorie sweeteners for the hospitality industry. Our portfolio includes stevia, monk fruit, xylitol, erythritol, and allulose, all of which are low GI, chemical-free, and suitable for diabetics and weight-conscious consumers. There is a clear shift in hospitality towards offering healthier options, and hotels are increasingly looking for natural alternatives to sugar and chemical sweeteners. We are also introducing a zero-calorie welcome drink made from natural ingredients like orange and lemon, addressing the need for healthier guest experiences. At AAHAR, we are presenting both our retail and wholesale offerings, catering to everything from individual use to bulk requirements for food production. ■



Leena Mittal
Managing Partner
Herboveda India



Dinesh Roa Ullal
VP, Operations,
Posiflex Technology
(India)

I have been with the organisation for over 28 years, witnessing the growth of POS (point-of-sale) solutions in India. It is always good to be at AAHAR, which has become a very crucial event for us. This year, we are showcasing our complete range of POS solutions, including billing systems, standard POS, mobile POS, kiosks, and real-time display solutions. While we have traditionally been a Windows-based company, we are now increasingly focusing on Android-based technologies as well. Today's consumers, particularly Gen Z, are not just focused on food and ambience, but also on seamless billing and payment experiences. There is a growing preference for self-service and faster transactions. This is where innovation in POS becomes critical, and our solutions are designed to support these evolving expectations in the industry. ■



Sreekumar Prabhakar
Regional Director
(Middle East & SAARC)
FAGOR Professional



We are very pleased to be here at AAHAR again this year, continuing our association over many years, as it provides strong exposure to the market. This year, instead of focusing only on live demonstrations of combi ovens, we are presenting our 360-degree solutions as a foodservice equipment manufacturer. Our portfolio includes horizontal and vertical cooking systems such as combi ovens, along with complete refrigeration lines, dishwashing solutions, and large-capacity cooking equipment. We are showcasing a comprehensive range of kitchen equipment required by the hospitality industry. With the rapid growth of hotels in India, there is a clear increase in demand for advanced equipment. The industry is increasingly focusing on hygiene and quality, which requires more technologically developed solutions. ■



We are showcasing our range of buffet warmer inductions at AAHAR 2026, all of which are entirely made in India, including the development, software, programming, glass, and PCBs. We have presented five different types of induction systems with varying cut-out and glass sizes to cater to different requirements. The technology behind these products is based on half-bridge processors, with a strong focus on power efficiency. Each induction consumes only around 500 watts per zone, making it highly energy efficient for hospitality operations. Our focus remains on delivering efficient, locally manufactured solutions that meet the evolving needs of the hospitality industry, and we are encouraged by the strong support we continue to receive from our clients. ■



Puneet Kumar
Co-Founder, Head
Sales and Strategy
Equipsof Innovations



Rajesh Malhotra
MD
Metro Plus Lifestyle



We are into HORECA furniture, where we conceptualise, manufacture, and deliver customised solutions for indoor and outdoor applications, as well as hotel rooms. At AAHAR, we are showcasing a wide range of products, including outdoor furniture made of wicker, braid, aluminium, and wood, along with parasols, gazebos, lounge café furniture, and hotel room furniture. One of the concepts we have introduced this time is a complete hotel room solution priced at ₹75,000, which has received a positive response. With the rapid growth of hotels and restaurants, demand in the hospitality sector has increased significantly, especially for customised furniture solutions. We work closely with hotel chains and have built strong associations over the years, which has supported our consistent growth. ■



Mohit Sharma
CEO
Romio Technologies



We deal in digital display solutions and billing automation, including point-of-sale machines, thermal printers, self-ordering kiosks, and indoor and outdoor LED displays. Our focus is on making technology in India and making it affordable for the masses, including start-up restaurants and hotels. One of our innovations is digital display cubes that can be placed in reception areas or lounges to enhance visual appeal and marketing impact. We also offer outdoor LED solutions with extended on-site warranty, as well as self-ordering and self-check-in kiosks for hotels, which help improve operational efficiency. The demand for such solutions is increasing, especially as the industry adopts AI-driven technologies to reduce repetitive tasks. Our approach is centred on affordability, scalability, and sustainability. ■



Vishal Raman
Managing Director
Rational

We showcased two key products at AAHAR 2026 — the iCombi, which is a combi steamer, and the iVario, an all-in-one braising and multifunctional cooking system. These solutions are designed to bring efficiency and versatility into commercial kitchens. We witnessed a significant surge in demand, not only due to the increasing number of hotels opening across the country, but also because of the shortage of commercial gas supply. Over the past few days, demand for electric kitchen equipment increased sharply, and we saw a strong uptake of our electric units. In fact, demand was so high that we nearly ran out of stock. At AAHAR, visitors experienced our innovations first-hand, as we conducted live cooking demonstrations, allowing them to see, smell, and taste the output. ■





At AAHAR, our focus is on showcasing customised bedding solutions for leading hospitality brands such as Marriott, Radisson, Wyndham, IHG, The Leela, and Sarovar, where each mattress is designed according to specific brand guidelines, ranging from 10–13 inches in varied specifications. One of the key highlights is the newly launched Tranquility Premium range, which has recently been selected in the Marriott premium category. In terms of technology, there is a clear evolution in material usage, with innovations such as latex being introduced in comfort layers and memory foam being incorporated into quilting by several global brands. These hybrid materials are enhancing guest comfort and satisfaction. With rapid expansion across hotel chains in India, demand is increasing significantly, supported by new brand entries and growing inventory.” ■



Mayank Sharma
Business Head - Hospitality (Premium Segment)
King Koil



Vivek Prem
Regional Manager (North and East)
Wyntronix



We are a company dedicated exclusively to the hospitality industry, with a presence of over 14 years, and we work as principal partners for leading global brands such as Onity, AEI Telephones, and Corby by Windsor. The products are pre-approved by almost all major international and domestic hotel chains, including Marriott, Hilton, IHG, ITC, Taj, and Sarovar, which positions us strongly when new projects come into the market. Our offering covers the complete range of guest room requirements, starting from electronic locking systems at the entry point to in-room amenities such as minibars, kettles, safes, telephones, hairdryers, and mirror TVs. With the rapid growth of hotel brands across India, including their entry into smaller cities, demand for quality products is increasing significantly. ■



We offer indoor and outdoor smoking cubicles designed for hotels, bars, restaurants, and nightclubs, which can be installed easily in any space without the need for ducting. These glass-enclosed cubicles allow smokers to use designated areas while our systems filter smoke-filled air and convert it into purified air. With the growth of hotels and foodservice establishments, the relevance of such solutions has increased significantly, as smoking is not permitted indoors unless specific norms are followed. Our products help hospitality operators comply with these requirements. They also support business by allowing smokers to remain within the premises instead of stepping outside, which can positively impact revenue. As more hotels integrate bars and nightlife offerings, the demand for such solutions is expected to grow further. ■



Sameer Narang
Vice President
Smoke Solutions



Ashish Singh
Regional Director
ISC Nordisk Clean Solutions

We are a Swedish manufacturer specialising in dishwashing and pot washing solutions. At AAHAR 2026, we are showcasing two product lines. One is from the Nordisk brand, which includes dishwashing machines and pot and pan washing systems, and the second is from Silanos, where we are presenting a similar range of equipment. These solutions are designed to cater to the evolving requirements of professional kitchens in the hospitality sector. With the rapid growth of hotels across the country, demand for such equipment has increased significantly. We are currently receiving strong enquiries and interest from customers and hotel operators across India. There has been a noticeable boost in the hospitality sector in recent times, and we expect this momentum to continue over the next few years. ■



We specialise in uniform footwear for the hospitality sector, catering to staff across housekeeping, front office, kitchen, and security teams. Over the past seven to eight years, we have continuously enhanced our products in terms of durability and performance, with improved adhesives, stronger stitching, and reliable construction — especially for Oxford-style footwear widely used by housekeeping and F&B staff. With employees on their feet for 10–12 hours a day, comfort and reliability are critical. Alongside performance, we also offer stylish, modern, and trending designs, along with customisation options to align with brand identity and specific requirements. Our focus is on delivering footwear that supports operational efficiency while ensuring all-day comfort and a refined, professional look. ■



Prasanna Deshpande
Founder
Tungsten Shoes



YK Mehta
Chief Executive
Mehta Furnishers

We are a 42-year-old company focused exclusively on the hospitality sector, catering only to hotels and restaurants with a strong professional approach. At AAHAR, we are showcasing a range of room accessories and other hotel products, with a particular specialisation in cane, wood, steel, and related materials. Our cane products, in particular, are made from carefully selected, top-quality raw materials, sourced and crafted with attention to detail. The demand for our products has remained consistent over the years, as these are labour-intensive offerings and we take on projects to the extent we can maintain our standard. Our focus continues to be on maintaining craftsmanship as well as reliability, which has helped us build long-standing relationships within the hospitality industry. ■



It is always a pleasure to be part of AAHAR, as it provides a strong platform to connect with both potential and existing customers. This year, we have introduced new machines, including our New Platform Series in laundry equipment, which features freestanding, compact machines designed specifically for hospitality and related industries. In the dishwashing segment, we continue to strengthen our innovations, such as a two-in-one bottle washer and dishwasher, developed in response to the industry’s shift from PET to glass bottles. At AAHAR, we are showcasing our complete range — with laundry solutions manufactured in India and dishwashing systems produced in Europe. With the hospitality sector growing swiftly, there is a clear focus towards sustainability, and we are addressing this through innovative solutions. ■



B Krishnamoorthy
Business Head,
Commercial Appliances,
IFB Industries Limited



Siddhi Agarwal
Director - Business Strategy,
Goyal Kitchen Equipments

We are into the manufacturing of commercial kitchen equipment, with one of the largest manufacturing units in India, and we offer turnkey kitchen solutions from start to finish. This includes everything from kitchen hoods, grates, burners, and electrical systems to imported equipment such as coffee machines, along with mechanical, electrical, and plumbing installations and after-sales maintenance. The hospitality sector is currently witnessing rapid growth, with new hotels, restaurants, and QSRs expanding across the country. Leading brands such as Lemon Tree, Hyatt, Taj, and Hilton are not only present in tier I cities but are also expanding into tier II and tier III markets. This expansion is directly increasing demand for our solutions. At the same time, technological advancements and evolving consultant and chef requirements are pushing the industry towards higher standards in quality and kitchen design. ■



Movements



Hakimuddin Kanorwala

Chief Finance Officer
Suba Hotels Limited

Hakimuddin Kanorwala has joined Suba Hotels Limited as Chief Finance Officer. With over 15 years of experience, he has deep expertise across financial planning and analysis, taxation, compliance, and risk management. He has been associated with leading global and domestic brands, including Hilton Hotels, Accor Hotels, and IHCL. ■



Amit Malik

Vice President
People & Culture,
South Asia, Accor

Accor has appointed Amit Malik as Vice President of People & Culture, South Asia. In this role, he will spearhead the People, Talent & Culture agenda across India and the broader South Asia region. With over two decades of experience, Amit brings a strong blend of strategic people expertise and business acumen. ■



Ranjan Banerjee

General Manager
Radisson Blu
New Delhi Dwarka

Ranjan Banerjee has joined Radisson Blu New Delhi Dwarka as its new General Manager. His expertise lies in operational excellence, revenue growth, and team leadership. Banerjee has built a distinguished career spanning more than 30 years, including over 12 years in General Manager positions with leading global brands. ■



Tarun Ratra

Director, Franchise
Operations, Wyndham
Hotels & Resorts

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has appointed Tarun Ratra as Director, Franchise Operations, Eurasia. He will oversee franchise operations across Eurasia, bringing extensive experience across multi-property hotel environments and franchise-led ecosystems. He will also focus on driving operational consistency and brand standards. ■



Colin Tait

Director, Beverage,
Ritz-Carlton,
Bangalore

Colin Tait has joined as Director of Beverage at the Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore. With a distinctive strength in concept-driven beverage experiences and whisky curation, Colin now brings his global perspective and creative direction to The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore. Tait is an award-winning beverage expert with over two decades of international experience. ■



Innu Lama

Cluster Learning
& Development
Manager, Hilton

Hilton has appointed Innu Lama as Cluster Learning & Development Manager for its Bengaluru portfolio. She will be responsible for driving the cluster's learning strategy, leadership development, and talent progression. She will also lead the design and implementation of training programmes aligned with Hilton's brand standards. ■



Rajib Ghosh

Loss Prevention
Manager
ITC Windsor

ITC Windsor has appointed Rajib Ghosh as its Loss Prevention Manager, further strengthening the hotel's commitment to safety, security, and operational excellence. With over two decades of experience in security management and risk mitigation, Ghosh brings deep expertise in safety operations and crisis preparedness. ■



Vanita Gomez

General Manager,
STILLWOOD
RETREAT, a Signature
Atmosphere Coorg

Atmosphere Core has appointed Vanita Gomez as General Manager of STILLWOOD RETREAT, a Signature Atmosphere Coorg. Her appointment strengthens the company's leadership team as it prepares to launch its second property in India. She brings over 18 years of hospitality experience, having worked with several premium hotel brands across India. ■



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