



# ENGAGE

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## NEW BEGINNINGS



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## From the President's Desk



**PUNEET CHHATWAL**  
President, Hotel Association of India  
MD & CEO, The Indian Hotels Company Limited

When one speaks of the travel and hospitality industry, one immediately envisages breath-taking locales, beautiful properties offering travellers world class hospitality and unique experiences that marry the authentic with varying levels of luxury. What one does not immediately associate the sector with though, is the huge environmental footprint it leaves in its wake.

As the focus on developing the travel and hospitality sector, which has a significant multiplicative impact on both, the GDP and employment globally, increases; there is an urgent need to address the environmental impact of the sector, even as it emerges anew from the shadows of an unprecedented pandemic. If the past two years have proven anything, it is that sector is strongly resilient and more than well equipped to adapt to the dynamic times we live in, including adopting measures to mitigate its impact on the environment.

At the Hotel Association of India's (HAI) 5th Hoteliers' Conclave in New Delhi earlier this year, we focused on the theme of "Resurgence – Looking beyond COVID-19". And while a number of initiatives to further boost the sector were in discussion, a strong area of focus that emerged at the conclave was around the topic of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG).

Today, the long-lasting implications such of environmental damage such as climate change is not only hitting close to home – it's knocking on our front door. From devastating floods, fiery wildfires and unprecedented heatwaves, each and every one of us is at the front seat of the impending climate disaster. For the tourism industry, which is responsible for approximately 8% of the world's carbon emissions, there is a strong responsibility to be part of the change that is needed to mitigate impacts and adapt to the threats posed by climate change.

While the early years of this century have built the momentum for a sophisticated ESG environment – there is now an urgent need to shift from debate to action and leverage ESG practices further to achieve stronger outcomes. Today, ESG policies increasingly on the minds of customers, companies, investors and regulators alike. For the travel and hospitality industry especially, ESG is the key to attaining the next frontier of travel and tourism and rightly so, because resource-efficient and carbon-neutral tourism, in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is the path of save both lives and livelihoods.

In order for the continued growth and development of the sector, it is essential to ensure that it is sustainable and inclusive, and that it contributes positively to communities, natural ecosystems, and the cultural heritage upon which our sector depends. And while the risks at play when it comes to ESG issues are many and real, the opportunities to be seized outnumber the risks.

Accelerated by the pandemic, a growing number of travellers are now more conscious about their travel footprint, and are choosing brands and experiences that employ sustainable measures in their operations. The rising consumer focus on the need for sustainability and environmental-friendly practices has translated down to organizations, which are increasingly adopting sustainable measures in their day-to-day operations.

Be it eliminating the use of single-use plastic across hotels or developing properties in cohesion with the local environment, biodiversity and communities or adopting green sources of energy, the focus on expanding and developing the travel and tourism sector in a sustainable manner has become key for the industry's future. Because while regulations and legislations can only go so far in holding companies accountable for ESG, ultimately the responsibility lies with each one of us – the stakeholders to embed more sustainable practices into business models, sooner rather than later.

India is today, at the cusp of transformation as a key travel and tourism destination with its rich biodiversity, culture and heritage. As responsible stakeholders looking to further elevate India's position on the global tourism map, there is no time like the present for us all to take a unanimous pledge to play a crucial role to build a healthier and more sustainable world for future generations. That is the only way to drive India's journey to being ranked among the top three travel and tourism economies in the world

Good luck to all on this ever-challenging, exciting journey!

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Sustainability is a way of life, a comprehensive whole of many activities and should not be confused with the parts. Acceptance of "responsibility" by each is the foundation of any sustainable strategy.



## ENGAGE



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B 212-214, Somdutt Chambers-1,  
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New Delhi-110066, India  
T +91 11 26171114, 26171110  
hai@hotelassociationofindia.com;  
info@hotelassociationofindia.com  
www.hotelassociationofindia.com

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Delhi-Mathura Road, Faridabad -121 007, Haryana

EDITOR & PUBLISHER  
Hotel Association of India  
info@hotelassociationofindia.com

CONSULTING EDITOR  
Kunal Advant

CONTENT & MARKETING



editorhai@consociaadvisory.com

DESIGN  
Anthony Lawrence  
anthonylawrance@gmail.com

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES  
(concerning reproducing of article)  
editorhai@consociaadvisory.com

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES  
info@consociaadvisory.com

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### Hall of Fame award for KB Kachru

Industry industry stalwart KB Kachru, Vice President, HAI & Chairman Emeritus and Principal Advisor – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, won the prestigious Hall of Fame award presented at the Sixth edition of the BW HOTELIER Indian Hospitality Summit and Awards 2022 (IHA-2022) that concluded on 1 November 2022. The awards included felicitations for General Managers, Hotel Managers, Executive Chefs, Directors of Sales and Marketing, Human Resources Managers, Executive Housekeepers, and Spa Managers, among others. The winners of the awards were finalised through a jury process, comprising the national jury, chaired by Mr. Kachru, and was accompanied by four regional juries – North, West, East and South, chaired by Suresh Kumar, Founder, KUE Management Services and Founder & Mentor, ROSAKUE Hospitality, Farhat Jamal, Chairman – Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Committee, IMC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sandip Mukherjee, Professor Emeritus & Advisor, Hospitality Academics and Veer Vijay Singh, CEO & MD, Trance Hotels, respectively. Chief guest Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena addressed the august gathering at the awards presentation.

### Marriott International to add 13-14 properties over 12 months

Hospitality major Marriott International will be adding about 13-14 hotels in India under different brands over 12 months. “Currently, the Marriott is managing about 134 properties under different brands. Another 13-14 more hotels will be added in 12 months’ time,” Gaurav Singh, Market Vice President, South & East India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, said. The group has about 60 agreements for hotels to open.

He said the new properties will be in Meghalaya, Kerala, Karnataka, and Telangana, among other places. He said the tier II cities in India are offering good business potential and Marriott is tapping that.

The global hospitality chain recently opened a Courtyard By Marriott Tiruchirappalli (Trichy) property with 108 rooms.



### Hotels test new models



The pandemic has taught us all not to keep all eggs in one basket, and therefore, Taj Hotels, Radisson and Apeejay Surendra Park Hotels, besides many others, are exploring newer models outside of their comfort zone. While Taj Hotels built its own food delivery platform Qmin and also set up Qmin food trucks, Radisson launched ‘Meetha By Radisson’, its premium mithai store which delivers goodies through prominent food delivery platforms such as Swiggy and Zomato. Qmin (which serves food from the Taj Hotels array of fine-dining restaurants) is already a ₹100 crore revenue brand. Apeejay Surendra Park Hotels has taken its iconic bar brand, Someplace Somewhere outside of Kolkata to Mumbai and Vishakapatnam, and has also launched a food delivery platform, Flying Tonga.



### Hotels on expansion mode

While hoteliers have put the pandemic blues behind them, as per hospitality consultancy Hote-livate, there are about 59,000 new rooms proposed across the country in the next five years. Of this, 72% or about 35,000 rooms are under active development. In 2020, pre-Covid, only about 35,000 rooms were being developed. The active development ratio has gone up by at least 10% now when compared to 2020. The consultancy said it takes into account projects that can be eligible to become a “chain-scale” hotel. About 6,800 rooms are going to come up in Bengaluru, followed by Mumbai which has about 5,400 rooms, Jaipur has 3,300 rooms and Delhi has about 1,800 rooms coming up.

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### Climate action pact



The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (the Alliance) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) committing both organisations to work closely together focusing on improving the environmental and social impact of the global hospitality industry.

Through the MoU, WTTC and the Alliance have pledged to promote a united voice for a more sustainable future for the hospitality industry, cooperating on new research projects to foster understanding of the latest in sustainability innovation.

The two organisations will also work together to raise awareness of new initiatives and success stories, launch new commissions and advisory bodies, further advance understanding of innovation and key sustainability indicators and partner on critical issues such as youth employability, human trafficking, and climate action.

### Japan reopens to tourists

As Japan throws open its doors to visitors after more than two years of pandemic isolation, hopes for a tourism boom face tough headwinds amid shuttered shops and a shortage of hospitality workers.

Japan will reinstate visa-free travel to dozens of countries, ending some of world's strictest border controls to slow the spread of COVID-19. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is counting on tourism to help invigorate the economy and reap some benefits from the yen's slide to a 24-year low



### Tourism conclave

The 65th meeting of the UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa brought together around 25 Ministers of Tourism and high-level representatives from 35 countries as well as leaders from the private sector. In Tanzania just days after UNWTO celebrated World Tourism Day, the Commission meeting embraced that day's theme of 'Rethinking Tourism', with a focus on innovation, branding, jobs and education and partnerships



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~ Pesh hai ~



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Chef Kunal Kapur

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# Being Responsive & Responsible



**INGE HUIJBRECHTS**, Global Senior Vice President Sustainability, Security and Corporate Communications for Radisson Hotel Group, talks of their people and planet initiatives.

Tell us about the sustainability programs taken up by the Radisson Hotel Group?

Sustainability has evolved from being an abstract concept to being a set of practical measures, which have the power to create impactful change. RHG believes in being a thriving, sustainable, and responsible business that supports our people, communities and the planet. We have a strong responsible business heritage and sustainability program in place, which is built around three pillars: Think People, Think Community and Think Planet, and includes a comprehensive range of initiatives including a focus on business ethics, supply chain sustainability, carbon reduction, and sustainable value propositions to guests such as 100% carbon neutral meetings, and employability programs to build better futures. We are committed to Net Zero by 2050 and have just released our approved Science Based Targets aligned with the UN climate change goals.

**“We are committed to being Net Zero by 2050 and have just released our approved Science Based Targets aligned with the UN climate change goals”**

## THINK PEOPLE

- People will always be at the forefront of everything we do, and we are ensuring that guests and employees are made to feel safe when experiencing our ‘Yes, I CAN!’ service. In May 2020, we launched the Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol, an in-depth cleanliness and disinfection program including prevention procedures developed in partnership with SGS--world’s leading inspection, testing, verification, and certification company.
- To integrate responsible practices in our supply chain, we have partnered with EcoVadis, the world’s trusted provider of business sustainability ratings. The EcoVadis tool is used in the Group’s supply chain to increase transparency, advance positive action for people and the planet, support risk identification and mitigation, and measure and reduce scope 3 emissions of key suppliers. The Group has received Silver Medal recognition level by EcoVadis since 2017, putting the company in the top 8% of the Accommodation industry and top 25% of performers worldwide.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), with a focus on gender equality, is among our top priorities.

**“We target a 50-50 gender balance for General Managers, and leadership roles in corporate teams by 2030”**

The Group reaffirmed its strong ongoing focus on human rights, business ethics, and diversity in hotels worldwide by issuing its sixth slavery and human trafficking statement and by increasing the number of women in leadership roles to 29%. We target a 50-50 gender balance for General Managers and leadership roles in corporate teams by 2030.

- We provide excellent opportunities for team members to grow and develop their careers. Our online Learning and Development initiatives are in partnership with hospitality training provider, Typsy, which resulted in a 120% increase in training hours in 2021 versus 2020. The Group was recognized by Forbes as the #4 Best Employer in the Travel & Leisure industry worldwide, highlighting Radisson’s dedication to its employees and note-worthy distinction as a leading employer of choice.

**THINK COMMUNITY**

- We are partnering with SOS Children’s Villages.
- Across India, hotels are engaged in local community projects that provide Food, Shelter and a Better Future.
- In the last quarter, Radisson Kufri voluntarily came forward to refurbish and maintain the computer lab of a Deaf and Dumb School.
- Recently, one of our hotels donated 51 units of blood to help Thalassemia affected children
- Guests have the option to participate in the towel reuse program. For every towel that the guests choose to reuse for the second day, we provide a donation to Just A Drop, a leading international water charity, which runs the safe drinking water project around the world. One of the projects in India is in Viluppuram in Tamil Nadu State, India. The program has helped provide safe drinking water to 28,500 children so far.
- As a part of the ‘Soap for Hope’ initiative, we are recycling the used soap bars from hotels through partnered NGO “Doctors for You” and donating them to less privileged communities in need. This will not only enhance livelihood for the communities in need but also help

hotels reduce.

- Linen for Life is a sustainability initiative undertaken to help the community earn a small livelihood by converting linens discarded by hotels into new and useful items that can be sold and hence helping them to earn an income.

**THINK PLANET**

- RHG builds on a long tradition of being a responsible business, with the first environmental policy defined in 1989. In 2018, we became the first hotel to offer 100% carbon-neutral meeting rooms.
- RHG is committed to being Net Zero by 2050, and has taken active steps towards this goal. Two main levers are increasing the energy efficiency of buildings and transitioning to renewable energy.
- We introduced Diversey’s Innovative Chemicals in Laundry, which allows to operate at lower temperatures and save +20% in heat and water. We are committed to extending this to 30% of hotels by 2022-end to reduce our water, fuel, electricity, and carbon footprint.
- All RHG Hotels in South Asia are moving towards LED Lights across Hotels, and we have achieved 80% compliance and majority of our hotels have moved to solar hot water installations.
- All our hotels across South Asia have Sewage Treatment Plants that recycle sewage water and use it for Landscaping and Horticulture. 58% of RHG Hotels in South Asia are using the “Flush Me Not Program”, a Water Saving initiative.
- We are eliminating the use of Single Use Plastics, moving towards Inhouse Glass Bottles Water Plants across our 100+ hotels in India to prevent plastic waste at our hotels and have completely phased out plastic straws and stirrers.
- With SunFuel, the group is creating

**“In 2018, we became the first hotel to offer 100% carbon-neutral meeting rooms”**

an EV-charging infrastructure that will catalyze behavior modification among non-EV users to choose an electric car.

**Tell us a compelling story about the company’s ongoing ESG journey.**

In 2021, we announced two groundbreaking e-mobility partnerships establishing our position as a green mobility leader. The first partnership is with Allego, a leading pan-European provider, to bring EV charging solutions to all European Radisson Hotel Group properties by 2025 – it unveiled its first High-Performance charger in Frankfurt. The second partnership is with Sunfuel in India, aiming to equip the 100+ Radisson Hotel Group properties in the country with EV charging stations. The first chargers under this partnership were unveiled at the Radisson Blu Hotel Plaza Delhi Airport on World EV day in September.

The Radisson Blu Hotel in Bengaluru runs 100% on renewable energy, and is 100% energy self-sufficient. It produces energy through its own solar systems, generating exactly as much energy as it requires. On the other hand, the hotel has an air source heat pump installed with no diesel or combustion. It operates an energy efficient chiller with VFD operation with a saving of 50% and 100% LED lights are installed.

**How do you address fair and inclusive opportunities for people and communities where you operate?**

We offer continuous learning opportunities through Radisson Academy with customized training programs, from induction to leadership, and we focus on inclusive employment locally. In India 100% of our hotel teams and area headquarters are national. Recently we launched a joint training initiative with The Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council to provide job opportunities for job entrants from remote regions in India.

Several of our hotels provide employment to a number of differently abled people. As of today, 35 differently abled employees are engaged across RHG South Asia.

As a globally recognized Employer of choice in Tourism & Travel, we want to continue creating Memorable Moments for our guests and meaningful careers for our team members. **HAI**



Think  
**SUSTAINABILITY,**  
Choose  
**DIVERSEY**

Throughout the course of Diversey’s nearly 99 years of providing revolutionary **cleaning and hygiene** technologies, we’ve demonstrated that protecting and improving the environment is **good for business**. Today, billions of people across the world still live without access to safe water for various environmental, social and economic reasons. To ensure the health and safety of **our communities** and for **future generations**, it is critical that we all take responsibility and action to protect our water resources and consider how we can **use water more efficiently**.

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**82%** Less Carbon footprint



# RESURGENCE REVISITED

HAI Conclave brings industry leaders together to discuss sustainable ways forward



As the economy and the industry gradually return to normalcy paving way for economic recovery, the Hotel Association of India (HAI) hosted the 5th edition of its signature event, the HAI Hoteliers Conclave on 29th September 2022 at The LaLiT, New Delhi. Titled 'Resurgence – Looking beyond Covid-19', the daylong conference was a platform to highlight India's potential to become the biggest tourism destination with the combined effort of private players and the Government and became a trigger to incorporate feedback from the industry before the New Tourism Policy is rolled out.

The Conclave was thus a getting-together of the entire Hospitality fraternity along with partners and supporters of this vital cog of the economy. Besides the sleek chandeliers and expensive carpets, Hospitality is a story which is closely connected with India's growth. As we all try to build back, it is also important to take stock of the situation and to think ahead. There is absolutely no doubt that the sector will be critical to the post-pandemic economic revival of the country and the world. Delegates at the conference spoke about their vision ahead.

The keynote address was delivered by Mr Puneet Chhatwal, President, HAI, and Managing Director & CEO of Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL). Mr MP Bezburah, Secretary General, HAI led the inaugural session together with Mr Chhatwal, Shri G Kishan Reddy, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Government of India, Guest of Honor, Shri Arvind Singh, Secretary, Minister for Tourism, Government of India and leading hoteliers of the country. Seeking greater collaboration and cohesion between the government and private players, the tourism minister called on hoteliers to partner with

the Archaeological Society of India to help improve more than 3500 monuments across the country. Speaking on the employment crisis faced by India, the Minister believed it (crisis) can be alleviated if the growth of the tourism sector works in tandem with the government.

Among key speakers and session moderators who enlightened the esteemed audience with expert views were Dr Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson and MD, Bharat hotels, Ms Priya Paul, Chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels, Ms Ranju Alex, Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott Hotels, Mr Mandeep S Lamba, President, South Asia, HVS Anarock, Ms Aradhana Lal, Senior Vice President, Sustainability & ESG, Lemon Tree hotels, Mr Patu Keswani, Chairman and Managing Director,

Lemon Tree Hotels, Mr Manav Thadani, Founder and Chairman, Hotelivate, Mr Rohit Ramesh, MD & Partner, Boston Consulting Group, Mr Ajay Bakaya, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels, Mr Rohit Khosla, Executive Vice President, IHCL, Mr Rupak Gupta, Managing Director, UP Hotels Ltd, Mr Anil Chadha, Divisional Chief Executive, ITC Ltd, Mr Zubin Saxena, Managing Director and VP, Operations, South Asia, Radisson Group, Mr Rajneesh Malhotra, Chief Operating Officer, Chalet Hotels Limited, Mr S

Srinivasan, Managing Director, Kotak investment advisors Ltd, and many other distinguished speakers.

The effort was to have a comprehensive view of all important stakeholders of the Industry, to set clear paths ahead for all. Hotel Association of India (HAI), which is celebrating 25 years, has been an active proponent of the industry, taking up several industry issues and actively pursuing the Government to grant infrastructure status to the hospitality sector.

Browse through in the flowing pages, glimpses of the Conclave and highlights of key speakers.

**There is absolutely no doubt that the sector will be critical to the post-pandemic economic revival of the country and the world. Delegates at the conference spoke about their vision ahead**



## “WE SHOULD BE THE TOP THREE TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN THE WORLD”



**PUNEET CHHATWAL,**  
President, HAI, and Managing Director & CEO  
Indian Hotels Company Ltd

- Expand the supply of accommodation per 1 million people.
- There is potential to reach 5x growth in revenue and size of the sector, and 2.5x growth in jobs.
- With government support, the industry can play its part in building up key trunk infrastructure.

The Keynote address for the 5th HAI Hotelier’s Conclave was delivered by Mr Puneet Chhatwal, MD and CEO, Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL). Touching upon the key aspects of Hospitality, he presented a forward-looking vision for Tourism and Hospitality in India, and his optimism towards what the industry can achieve by 2047.

He stated that Hospitality contributes almost 10.4% to the GDP, and despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the resurgence of the industry is most impressive, with a majority of players having bounced back to pre-pandemic levels. However, Mr Chhatwal was quick to point out that there is still a very large number of sectors that lie untapped for promoting tourism in the country. He discussed the potential areas where tourism can be boosted, such as in culture, urban leisure activities, adventure tourism, health and wellness, wildlife, sustainability, and religious & spiritual tourism.

A major and most immediate solution to expanding tourism would be to expand the supply of accommodation per 1 million people, which is still quite low in India currently: we stand 6th in the world right now. Luxury Hospitality, associated with good service and facilities for guests, needs to be seen as a necessity. Mr Chhatwal augmented this argument by providing statistics for the distribution of luxury rooms currently. Luxury rooms currently occupy 1/3rd of the total available hotel accommodation, but this needs to be enhanced, along with a targeted change in perception for luxury accommodation, which is perceived as an elitist space in India.

Appealing for ease of doing business, he said Dubai,

Singapore and Thailand are important case studies. Dubai, from its humble beginnings as a small fishing village, is now a global hub of commerce and finance. Thailand and Singapore are both leveraging their tourist offerings with institutional features such as visa on arrival (especially in Thailand), to encourage greater revenues through tourism. The sector is the backbone of this sustained effort in promoting tourism, and Dubai, Thailand and Singapore boast of some of the best hotels in the world.

He said there is potential to reach 5x growth in revenue and size of the sector, and 2.5x growth in jobs--up to 100 million can be employed in this sector directly or indirectly. He sees this beyond being a pipe dream, with the government playing its part in promoting the sector. The tourism sector sees a budget outlay of USD 309 million allocated in the 2022-23 budget. There are also boosts given to the sector such as ecotourism, faster approval and procedural simplification for e-medical visas, and programs such as Incredible India, the Udaan scheme, Gatishakti, and so on.

Mr Chhatwal concluded his keynote address by introducing the key pillars for Hospitality going forward: Planning, Places, People, Policy, Processes and Promotion. The Hospitality industry is an immensely cross-cutting sector, with complex logistics of goods and guests. With governmental support, the industry can play its part in building up key trunk infrastructure such as roadways, electrification, and water supply. It can also enhance value chains in food and agriculture through PPPs.

India has immense potential to come in the Top Three tourist destinations in the world, and it is up to the Hospitality sector to unite and accomplish this vision, he said.

## WHAT THEY SAID

### “HOSPITALITY CAN BRING INDIA HIGHER ON GLOBAL TOURISM STAGE”



**G KISHAN REDDY,**  
Union Minister of Tourism, and Guest of  
Honour for the 5th HAI Hotelier’s Conclave

- The new National Tourism Policy, expected to be rolled out before the next Parliament session, will address various issues faced by the sector
- Need for Public Private Partnerships for expansion of tourism
- Tourism in India cannot be boosted without unity from all sectors.

Union Minister of Tourism, G Kishan Reddy, highlighted India’s potential to become a premier tourist destination which can only be possible with a strong collaborative push between the government and private players. The Minister explained some key statistics of the status of India in the global tourism sector, including the size of the industry and its capability of meeting global demands, and said: “It is high time that India played an active role in promoting the tourism industry.” He further elaborated “the need for comprehensive Public Private Partnerships to make (the expansion of tourism) happen”, and reassured the assembled hoteliers that the government would do all to facilitate the role of Hospitality in promoting Indian tourism to the world at large.

The Minister spoke of the Adopt a Monument initiative of the government under the Incredible India and Dekho Apna Desh campaigns, in which the 3,600 heritage sites, monuments and tourist sites in India may be “adopted” by the private/public sector to make them tourist-friendly and increase the site’s tourism potential by enhancing the overall experience.

The Minister’s address touched upon the many cross-cutting aspects of the Hospitality industry. He explained the enormous potential for cruise and medical tourism

within the country, and stated that these industries were yet to be maximized in terms of their full potential. “These are great investment opportunities, and we should do all we can to maximise investment in these spaces, he said.

Additionally, the Minister declared his intentions to host the Indian Tourism Conclave, a “3-day event bringing together the Hospitality industry, state and central governments, Archaeological Survey, and associated partners”, and also announced that the new National Tourism Policy, expected to be rolled out before the next Parliament session, will address various issues faced by the sector. The Government is in the process of incorporating industry feedback before the policy is finalized, and the policy will not only revitalize the hospitality and tourism industries, but also alleviate problems vis-à-vis unemployment with a gradual boost to hiring in the hospitality sector.

The Minister also spoke of revamping the hotel star categorisation system in the country. He drove home the point that consumers expect a certain quality and facilities when they choose to stay in highly rated hotels, and the absence of these would result in inhibited growth.

Concluding his address with “Jai Hind, Jai Bharat, Jai Tourism”, he called on the assembled hoteliers to practice the concept of “Athiti Devo Bhava” for foreign as well as domestic tourists, and reiterated that “tourism in India cannot be boosted without unity from all sectors”.

## “NOW IS THE TIME TO RE-EVALUATE THE WAY FORWARD”



**ARVIND SINGH,**  
Secretary (Tourism), Government of India

- The hotel fraternity managed to ride the tide of the financial downturn faced during Covid-19.
- G-20 next year offers an exceptional potential for the resurgence of the Hospitality industry.
- The Ministry of Tourism has identified 55 unique locations across the country for hosting G-20 conferences.

Arvind Singh, Secretary (Tourism), Government of India, spoke about the need to rethink Tourism and the Hospitality industry following the monumental impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. He addressed three key issues, namely the expectations of the Indian tourists, sustainable growth in the Hospitality sector, and the enormous role of the sector in the upcoming G-20 conference hosted by India. He highlighted the cross-cutting role of the Hospitality and Tourism sectors in these important issues. He noted that while hotels were among the most deeply impacted sectors due to Covid-19, the hotel fraternity managed to ride the tide of the financial downturn. With travel having bounced back, now is the time to reevaluate the way forward. He reiterated the point made earlier by the Minister of Tourism that consumers' expectation from the Hospitality industry had changed and were rising – they needed more out of their stay, be it facilities, value for money, services, etc. Indian hotels could no longer lag behind international hotels in their service provisions. There is also a strong surge in demand of Indian hotels, brought on by overseas promotion of the Indian hospitality industry. He mentioned the role of the sector in contribution to India's robust economic growth. The CAGR of the Tourism sector in

India was 5%, which is twice the global tourism sector CAGR. India should therefore have no problems with growing and sustaining its tourism and hospitality industry, he said. The key things contributing to this sustained growth and increased investor confidence was the institutional aid that the sector received from the government, including fiscal and financial aid. Mr Singh concluded his address with his views on G-20. India hosting the G-20 next year offers an exceptional potential for the resurgence of the hospitality industry. The Hospitality sector will play a crucial role in the hosting of events and ensuring that the dignitaries are housed comfortably. The scale of G-20 is substantial, with the ministry of tourism having identified 55 unique locations across the country for hosting conferences and events on diverse subjects – from tourism to finance to labour practices. Mr Singh explained that each of the locations chosen for hosting the events was done based on the availability to hotels and convention centres, and their ease of access to air, rail, and road connectivity. Mr Singh concluded his address on an optimistic note, stating that it was possible to elevate the Hospitality industry beyond pre-Covid levels of demand and service. With increased expectation to deliver to international standards, sustained and rapid growth in the sector, and the G20, the time for a resurgence of the Indian hospitality industry has come, he said.

## VOICES FROM THE CONCLAVE



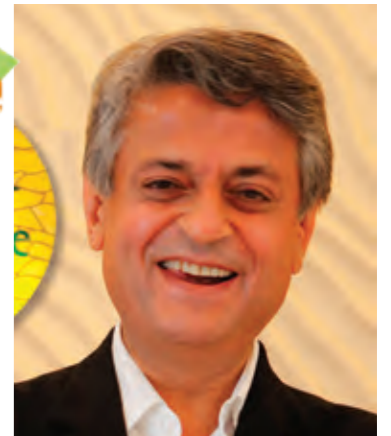
**DR. JYOTSNA SURI**  
Chairperson and Managing Director, Bharat Hotels Limited



As an industry, we are very resilient. As the president pointed out, the industry is like a ball, you press it down and the moment you release it, it comes right up. However, when it comes to our balance sheets, we can't write off the two years that have gone by. Many hotels have gone under because of lack of funds. Our balance sheets are badly stretched. Are we looking at making new hotels? Certainly not, in my group at the moment because we need to consolidate. We have to stand on our feet firmly before we can even think of borrowing money. Our interest rates are huge, and our tenure for the loans is very short. We were on the verge of an IPO, and then the market came down and the valuation started sliding. Then covid came and hit us badly. So while we do see an improvement in business, our financial health will take some time to fully recover.



**PATU KESWANI,**  
Chairman & Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd



The creation of supply in India is nearly impossible. My company has built 6,000 rooms in the last 15 years--the largest contributor to room-supply in India. For whatever reasons, banks have been treating hotels like real estate. The sector has not got industry status. So, you get a seven-year loan at 10% because it's risk-adjusted, because the RBI says it's risky, and therefore it's nearly impossible to build a hotel in India on a standalone basis. You always need some additional funding from somewhere.



**KB KACHRU,**  
Vice President, HAI & Chairman Emeritus  
& Principal Advisor - South Asia, Radisson



The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has become our voice. Their collaborative approach with the private sector has led to many initiatives and recommendations for policy formation. Thank you for being our voice in the cabinet and the ministry. Mr Puneet Chhatwal has been the torchbearer and HAI has led the industry to a positive change in the Hospitality sector. At HAI, we have a firm commitment towards leading the change for the hotel industry. We want to, and we will ensure, to make all efforts with the government and make Hospitality a catalyst for the country's economic growth and job creation.



**PRIYA PAUL,**  
Chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels

I think the demand is really encouraging. We are up 19% over 2019. Our occupancies are 91% in the half year. Even though bulk of our hotels are city hotels, we see a resurgence, a sort of revenge business travel too. A lot of companies are having their offsites and conferences because of Zoom fatigue. I think in the next five-seven years, there's going to be a huge shortage of rooms because many projects have been stalled. So how do you encourage the supply? Some of it is from the Ministry of Finance, and some of it is all about banking, loans, and interest rates. I think it's also about the licensing and making it quicker and fairer. I see a lot of growth happening in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. Our next hotel openings are in Dimapur and Port Blair. A few years back, many would not have considered investing in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, but the land costs are low, and smaller towns are fast catching up. So that model works.

**MANDEEP LAMBA,**  
President (South Asia), HVS ANAROCK



Two years back, occupancy was 19%, and RevPAR was Rs 649. That time, every single person thought it was the end of the world, at least as much as our sector was concerned. And then, of course, the resilience, that is inherent to the sector and to all of us, happened. If you look at the data for the current financial year, dating from April to August, we are ahead of 2019. The only thing that I want to put into perspective is that our measurement yardstick cannot be 2019! Our highest ADR, RevPAR, was in 2007. It's been 15 years since we haven't got there yet, right? So, let's change the yardstick. Let's look at where we were and where we need to be.



**AJAY BAKAYA,**  
Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels Pvt Ltd

In the last 12 odd months, at HAI, we went knocking on every possible door. We got as far as parliament of India. We got an audience with every single bank chairman in this country. They were all very sympathetic.

**MANAV THADANI,**  
Founder and Chairman, Hotelivate



The question today is, are we in the new normal? Post-Covid, we seem to have reimagined. We seem to have reset our businesses in ways that we could execute them better, right? While we have said it so often, what does it really mean? Today, because of the pandemic, some of the takeaways are that you don't need to be in the gym to exercise. You don't need to be necessarily in an office to work. So, you know, things have changed the way we are doing holidays, the way business is being thought out.



**MP BEZBARUAH,**  
Secretary General, HAI

The Conclave has been a great opportunity for the Hospitality industry to take stock of the status of the industry post-Covid, share experiences, and exchange ideas. The Conclave deliberated on the role of the industry in India @2047. It was an occasion for in-depth assessment of the lessons learned, the challenges facing the industry, and how to exploit the opportunities in making Tourism & Hospitality truly a pillar of development.

**SHEREEN BHAN,**  
Managing Editor, CNBC-TV18



We may argue and quibble about the infrastructure or the lack of it in some parts of the country, but I can safely say that in terms of service standards, the Indian hospitality industry is right up there and you all deserve a round of applause for that. Congratulations to each of you.



**VIPUL PRAKASH,**  
COO, MakeMyTrip & Goibibo



I have attended a lot of these sessions and we always end up spending a lot of time on RevPAR, ADRs, and all. Let me flip it around a bit. ADR, RevPAR, we might think we are in control, but actually, the RevPAR or ADR is what the consumer is willing to pay for what we offer. And therefore, what my submission would be, as we go forward, the next 10% of growth is going to be much tougher than the last 10% of growth. You know, going from 90 to 100 was difficult. The next 10% is going to be tough. That is because the customer is not in that mindset and we are seeing it in the number of visits they are making before they decide on a property. The average number of hotels they are searching for before they make a decision is increasing. What does that mean? People have become more conscious about what they choose. They are looking for real value now.

**RANJU ALEX,**  
Area Vice President - South Asia, Marriott Hotels India Pvt. Ltd



There is a huge amount of growth happening in Tier-2/Tier-3 cities, which we had not witnessed earlier. That's pleasantly surprising. We signed the maximum number of hotels during covid, so somewhere in the owner community, there is a positive vibe that things are going to work. If Marriott has seen it, I'm sure other companies have seen it too. I think there is that positivity in the country about this industry growing further on. There are issues, like, in trying to get the funding, trying to get the bureaucracy out of the way and actually getting a hotel to open. But things are getting better. We have been engaging with our owner partners very closely. I can tell you the shift that I have seen in the last 12 years with Marriott International, because that is where we have an operator and owner relationship. Things have smoothed out quite a bit. Can they be better? Of course, everything can be better. We just need to work around the nitty-gritties. The industry status will help the community in a large way to get where it wants to be.



**ROHIT KHOSLA,**  
Executive Vice President (Operations), IHCL

At the very core of our operations is Taj-ness, which is based on values of trust, awareness, and joy. And these three values are in context with all our stakeholders, owners, partners, customers, employees, and the community at large. We are very clear that the future has to be sustainable, inclusive growth for all.

**ARADHANALAL,**  
Senior Vice-President - Sustainability  
& ESG, Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd



Many companies have worked on their ESG aspects. It is good corporate citizenship. The goodwill of your brand grows, and customers start choosing you. Your investors will support you. And all stakeholders will admire your initiatives, whether it's your suppliers, consumers, the public at large, the government, or whoever is watching your organization. At Lemon Tree, our strategy is how do we minimize our resource utilization and how do we improve and increase efficiencies? We move over to renewable energy to the extent we can, increase our energy efficiency and reduce the wastage. When you look at renewables, we ended FY22 at 15.25%. We are going to end this year at 28% of total consumption, and the target for FY 26 is 50%.



**JESPER PALMQVIST,**  
Senior Director, Asia Pacific, STR

What has blown us away is how the demand has come back, over these years from 2020, we are now globally in that last 10%. It's going to take a bit longer, because business travel, and MICE, that is not yet coming, but it will come. Now we are talking about real ADR versus nominal ADR because of inflation pressure. The demand is growing. You see the rates go up because of that increasing demand.

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# GLIMPSES of the CONCLAVE





# RETURN OF IMAGINATION



**NIRANJAN KHATRI**, ex-general manager, environment initiatives, ITC Hotels, conceived of sustainable hotels when sustainability was the least talked about subject 34 years back. Many terminologies, now used popularly, had not gained currency when he pioneered the concept of eco-designing at Welcomgroup Bay Island in Port Blair. Thinking on the ground, playing by the ear, he cobbled up a sustainable strategy at the Hotel, working case by case, joining the dots in nature, plugging the gaps wherever needed, and reimagining service design. His micro-level interventions that led to macro changes is a story worth retelling, for generations to understand the imperatives of sustainable growth, that must move beyond the talk. “Think of return on imagination to see the real return of investment,” he quips.

Niranjan has headed CII’s Renewable Energy cell, has developed Eco Rating for the Delhi Government (distributed to 1200 schools, translated into Marathi & further distributed to 6000 schools). He was on the board of the National Trust formed by the Ministry of Social Justice, also a part of the expert committee of the Indian Institute of corporate affairs, MoCA; Ex Non Executive Director of Central Electronics Ltd., Founder and ex-president of Andaman & Nicobar tourism guild.

He is the recipient of the Helen Keller Award in 2006 & in 2011; Karamveer Puraskar 2009; Green Hotelier award 2010 & Parivartan Sustainability Leadership Award 2012, CII green champion in 2016.

His path-breaking, enlightening story of Welcomgroup Bay Island, Port Blair in his own words:

**A**ndaman & Nicobar is God’s own country with gin clear waters, thick verdant tropical forests, rich marine and mangrove eco-systems, dormant and active volcanoes and ancient tribes almost 2000 years behind time living in near total nudity, but in complete harmony with nature.

To me, the Andamans was like a case study. Being a small place, one could see and study, almost to a measurable degree, the mounting pressures of modern-day commercial enterprise on the beautiful environment which undoubtedly needed protection, with the parallel task of providing fuel and fodder and meeting the employment needs of the small local population of the islands.

The task was large and it required a macro vision and a harmonised effort from the entire industry promoting tourism with the help of the local administration. In order to generate “credibility”, we created a “feasible” model in our hotel to combat the resource problems at a micro

level which could be replicated by organisations to their cost and goodwill advantage.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective was to create a new “Green Model” to operate the hotel in an eco-responsible manner and to create an ecotourism model for the island, which could be replicated by the Welcomgroup chain and by the entire industry, through the example-setting method, in different locations, with the local nuances.

The model developed by us concentrated on the strategy employed was the four R’s: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Rethink systems, procedures and policies for the hotel unit.

The unit addressed the resource/environmental issues by adopting an internal and external strategy.

The INTERNAL green strategy was initiated because of the fundamental belief that “we must practice what we preach”. The Internal strategies were put into play by the end of 1988 until April 1992.

The hotel encountered problems pertaining to water, soil, waste, paper etc. This led to a creative addressal of the problems as they came along.

**The result of our activities led to cost, image and operational advantages in the hotel and within the chain. WG chain became the first eco-responsible chain in the country with all internal stakeholders working as team in this important emerging domain**

**In order to generate “credibility”, we created a “feasible” model in our hotel to combat the resource problems at a micro level, which could be replicated by organisations to their cost and goodwill advantage**

## a) WATER MANAGEMENT:

In 1991, our filtered water supplies were cut down from 10 kilolitres to 2 kilolitres per day. In order to run our business, we had to break our entire pipeline system of galvanized iron and replace it with plastic pipelines (to avoid corrosion) so that the clean salt water from the sea could be used for flushing toilets, thereby reducing the demand on filtered water supplied by the municipality.

A well was dug in the hotel despite knowing that we would not get underground water. However, the intention was to harvest rainwater, which was used in the summer season for gardening. The same example could be extended to our cities, which are short of water today. Such harvested water could be used for washing cars, watering the garden or any other such use to reduce pressure on the supply of precious municipal filtered water. It must be remembered “water saved is also energy saved”. Such sumps/wells dug in houses could be used for breeding fish, which would be a natural predator for mosquito larvae which could otherwise breed in the stored water.

## b) WASTE MANAGEMENT:

WOur objective was to look at reducing waste at the top and bottom ends of the pipe. Tourists went for sightseeing trips to the other islands in Port Blair with lunches packed in cardboard boxes. These boxes were invariably left behind on the islands thereby creating a garbage problem - a veritable visual assault. We stopped the usage of cardboard boxes and started giving the guests packed lunches in steel boxes. These boxes had to be brought back failing which a token fine was levied. In the bargain, recurring costs were wiped off and the garbage level was reduced.

In order to create awareness on forest cover, our hotel unit started an afforestation programme in Port Blair by planting 1,500 saplings in the airport complex.

## POLLUTION & POVERTY:

Human beings & poverty are the biggest polluters and the large growing numbers negate any positive action. WGBl, therefore, created a model in these two areas.

**Population:** The hotel created a policy whereby a cash incentive was offered to all employees who got married but postponed starting a family for 2 years by design.

**Poverty:** WGBl adopted one of the poorest orphanages on the islands and helped them with educational

material. The services of the hotel carpenters, plumbers and electricians were provided gratis.

The thought process behind these changes was that if the entire industry accepted the model, then a lot could be done as a contribution of the industry which, when dovetailed with the government effort in this area, would lead to national advantage.

The EXTERNAL strategy was spearheaded through the formation of the Andaman & Nicobar Tourism Guild (ANTG) to address the problems facing the hotel and tourism industry. The objectives of the Guild were as follows:

- a) To accept responsibility for a larger canvas by identifying the issues which were hampering tourism in the island's industry and taking it up with the local government through a common platform.
- b) To create a sustainable ecotourism model which would be acceptable to all arms of the tourism trade-hotels, travel agencies and boat operators.

I was at first Eco-illiterate and was totally oblivious of the infrastructural and ecological problems of the islands. As every problem cropped up, I found myself evolving/learning in consultation with the hotel management team. We were sensitive to the fact that our actions should be translated without compromising on quality and with the direct intention of influencing guest behaviour by sharing the problem and solutions in all our communications in the hotel and in the islands

**The problem with water is that since it flows from the taps, it creates an illusion of plenty!**

**Demand for water will grow as the global population is likely to touch 9.8 billion by 2050, and 2 billion people in the world live without access to clean water**

through creative hoardings.

ENVIRONMENT MUSEUM:

Towards the end of my tenure in WGBI, we made a small environment museum with Rs. 25,000. The essence of this museum was to educate and trigger people's minds into thinking of the environment and to emulate our hotel's simple but effective strategy.

The result of our activities led to cost, image and operational advantages in the hotel and within the chain. WG chain decided to become the first eco-responsible chain in the country.

*(Mr Khatri first wrote this article for ILO)*



Hawa Mahal, Jaipur

## THINK ABOUT IT!

*Niranjan Khatri explains it by facts:*

- Every second, a forest the size of a football field is lost, according to the deforestation statistics from 2021. This means that every year the world loses 14,800 square miles of forest, which is an area of Switzerland's size. Since 2003, we've lost double the amount of global tree cover.
- As per UN, 12 million hectares of arable land, enough to grow 20 tons of grain, are lost to drought and desertification annually, while 1.5 billion people are affected in over 100 countries. Due to drought and desertification, 23 hectares are lost per minute!
- The momentum to phase out ozone-depleting CFCs grew after the Montreal Protocol was agreed on 16 September 1987. WGBI made incremental changes by moving to open windows for ventilation instead of relying on room fresheners, disinfectant sprays etc., which in the 1980s, were not CFC-free.
- Problem with water is that since it flows it creates an illusion of plenty! Demand for water will have grown by 40% by 2050, and 25% of people will live in countries without enough access to clean water. This warning does not come as a surprise. The UN, and other global organisations, has been warning us of water shortages by 2050 for years — if not decades. Half of the world's population could be living in areas facing water scarcity by as early as 2025. Some 700 million people could be displaced by intense water scarcity by 2030. By 2040, roughly 1 in 4 children worldwide will be living in areas of extremely high water stress. HAI

# INCREDIBLE RAJASTHAN

The state of palaces and kings is, in many ways, the flagbearer of heritage and luxury tourism in India. We take a closer look.

**BY RIAAN JACOB GEORGE**

**F**or the past few decades, Rajasthan has established itself as a perfect case in point for the tourism model in India. At the very heart of the tourist experience are the multitudes of royal homes now effectively transformed into hotels. In addition to the luxury hotels like Jaipur's Rambagh Palace or Jodhpur's Ajit Bhawan Palace, the state boasts innumerable havelis and smaller palaces, where one can truly experience the design and architecture of the state. Be that as it may, Rajasthan's charm is certainly not

limited to its palaces and royal experiences. The state is a nerve centre of heritage temples and nature tourism too. Be it the spectacular tiger trails of Ranthambore, the leopard-filled landscapes of Jawai, or the innumerable national parks that are around the state, the options are endless for eco-tourism. Road trip enthusiasts will swear by the good quality of Rajasthan's roads for driving experiences, especially through the desert. And finally, the state is also famous for spiritual tourism, with its slew of centuries-old temples, mosques and shrines. With all that in mind, let us take a quick journey through Rajasthan to see what's trending this season.

**The kind of listings that one is seeing on Airbnb is truly unique, from artsy Jaipur studios to ancient havelis as well as new-age homes built in cargo containers**





Bapu Bazar



Pansari Bazar



Local Market



Sariska National Park



Sunset Gadsisar, Jaipur

### The Age of Domestic Tourists

According to a report released by the department of tourism, and published in The Times of India, Rajasthan has seen a massive surge of revenge tourism in the post-pandemic era. Nearly 36.48 million tourists visited Rajasthan for the period January to June 2022. This is a steep rise as compared to the 22.36 million visitors recorded for the same period in 2019. The report also suggests that domestic tourists have largely dominated the tourism numbers for Rajasthan, and the MICE space has emerged in importance. "The MICE infrastructure in Rajasthan has always been good, but in the post-pandemic era, this has only got emphasised, due to a large number of domestic tourists heading to this state for weddings, conferences and events. Hotels like Leela Palace, Fairmont and ITC Rajputana in Jaipur or Leela Palace and Oberoi Udaivilas in Udaipur or even the Westin Pushkar have established themselves as ideal places to host large-scale weddings with their infrastructure and facilities. Consumers deprived of travel for the past three years are seeing the value of hosting big-ticket events in Rajasthan and therefore choosing to do so," says Neeraj Gupta, founder of Peekay Holidays. We also got a wedding and planner to weigh in. "When it comes to showcasing an Indian destination, Rajasthan is the ideal spot to host a wedding, a birthday party or an event. We recently organized a high-end birthday party at the Samode Palace in Jaipur. Not only did our customers enjoy the heritage aspect of staying - and partying in an age-old palace - but we also lined up a host of local experiences for them. That way, the destination was showcased so beautifully in terms of art, craft, textiles, food and culture," says Shashank Gupta, founder of wedding events planner, Bandwidth



Dilwara Jain Temples, Mount Abu

Events. No surprise then that global platform Airbnb has also been heavily marketing its Rajasthan offerings. The kind of listings that one is seeing on Airbnb is truly unique - from artsy Jaipur studios to ancient havelis as well as new-age homes built in cargo containers. So much so that Airbnb recently partnered with Indian aviation giant IndiGo to host some leading Indian content creators in Jaipur, to showcase Rajasthan as a viable "friends only" destination. While on the subject of destination-specific experiences, we also caught up with Kartik Gaggar who founded the experience platform Rajasthan Studio which curates offbeat and unique experiences that can be booked by travellers. As a result, we spent two days in Jaipur recently and booked some of Rajasthan Studio's experiences. Thus, we went inside an ancient haveli in the oldest part of Jaipur to spend an afternoon with a meenakari artist who descends from a long line of meenakars. We also went to the far corners of Jaipur to learn how the wooden blocks for block printing are made and spent a couple of hours in the company of a traditional Rajasthani puppet maker.

● Destination



Chittorgarh



Khumbhalgarh



Blue City, Jodhpur



Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary

**The Rajasthan Experience - Natural and Manmade**

There are eight sites across the state that have been earmarked by UNESCO. Two of our favourites, and relatively lesser visited ones, are the Kumbhalgarh Fort with its magnificent 36km wall, perched atop a hill, as well as the historic Chittorgarh Fort with its tranquil lake. Then there are the more popular ones like Jaisalmer Fort, which is one of the world's last few inhabited forts, with a fully functional town within it, as well as the breathtakingly beautiful Amer Fort, which stands outside Jaipur.

Tourists on the conventional Rajasthan tourism trail will often neglect to visit the Keoladeo National Park. This is a former royal game sanctuary and now protects hundreds of species of birds. The UNESCO-tagged Ranthambore Fort lies at the heart of the eponymous national park, known for its tigers. Here, luxe tourism sees expression in the form of chic safari lodges like Aman-i-Khas and the Oberoi Vanyavilas, which attract high-spending wildlife enthusiasts from around the world.

For those seeking leopards, the Jawai region, in the middle of the desert offers some amazing lodging options like the Sujan Jawai and the Brij Pola Jawai Conservation Reserve. The landscapes here might be stark and the climate tends to be extreme, but the quality and population of leopards here is unmatched, making it a big draw for tourists from across the world.

At the very core of the Rajasthan experience is "design". While traditional aesthetics do continue to rule the roost, there is a new wave of contemporary artists indulging in interesting activities. For tourists, however, a walk through the myriad lanes of Jaipur's Johari Bazaar, Jodhpur's old Blue City and Udaipur's Old City, offers a glimpse into the

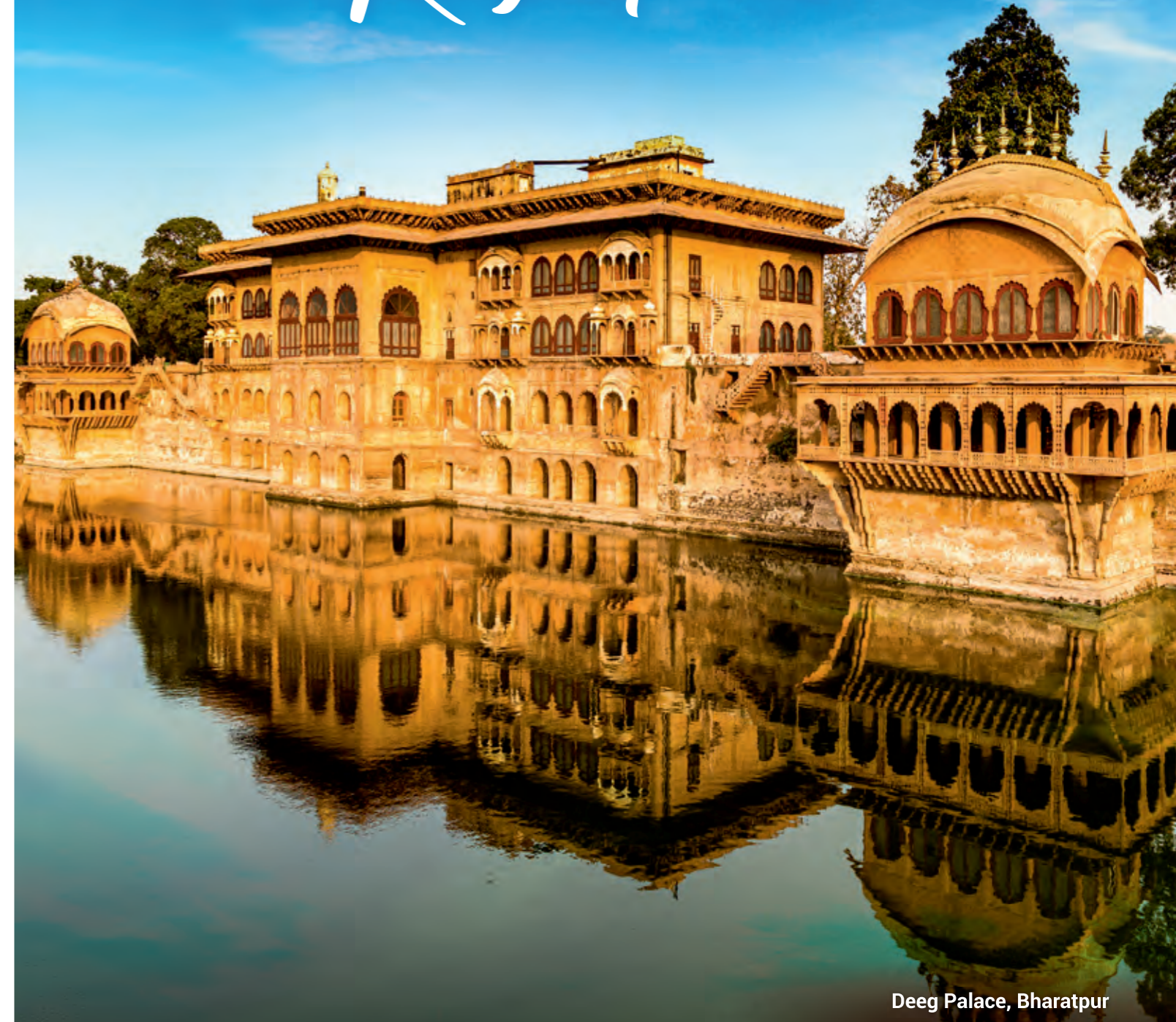
**Tourists on the conventional Rajasthan tourism trail will often neglect to visit the Keoladeo National Park. This is a former royal game sanctuary and now protects hundreds of species of birds**

handicrafts culture of Rajasthan. Whether it is scoring some fantastic block print fabrics, a Bandhani dupatta or even buying an extravagant poshaak in a glitzy Udaipur boutique, there are many ways to engage in local handicrafts.

Please do take the time to visit the local markets to see some of the smallest stores that sell handmade jewellery, mojris, block print kurtas, leather accessories and even statues and curios that make for great souvenirs. This will enable you to truly participate in an immersive Rajasthan experience and contribute to local artisans. The idea is to strike the right balance, in Rajasthan, of luxury and local.

A spellbinding getaway awaits you in

# Rajasthan



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Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan



**RAJASTHAN**  
The Incredible State of India!



**New-age Jaipur**

While tourism stakeholders have always been used to the traditional tourist trails of Jaipur, there is a new scene emerging in the city - modern and contemporary Jaipur. The city is becoming a hub of sorts for design, fashion, architecture, food and even a cafe culture. "Jaipur now has a new appeal. People might not necessarily only be looking for traditional jharokas and camel rides. They are now coming here to experience the

trendy scene," says Neeraj Gupta of Peekay Holidays. As a result, we see trendy homegrown and indie brands like Jaipur Watch Company, Parampara Jaipur, Hermosa, Hot Pink, Jaipur Rugs among many others, creating magnificent design-heavy spaces that attract the discerning. In addition, the city now sees such a buzzing cafe culture with independent cafes such as Curious Life Coffee Roasters being extremely popular.

MANVĀR Shergarh The Desert Resort

**A walk through the myriad lanes of Jaipur's Johari Bazaar, Jodhpur's old Blue City and Udaipur's Old City, offers a glimpse into the handicrafts culture of Rajasthan**

**Spiritual Tourism**

Rajasthan is a veritable hotbed of spiritual tourism in India. Pilgrims from across the globe flock to the state to visit its many sites of religious significance. The famous Ajmer Sharif Dargah is a multi-faith space, which sees millions of visitors annually. Pushkar's historic Brahma temple is absolutely unmissable, as are the multiple festivals attached to it. In downtown Udaipur, overlooking Lake Pichola, the famous Karni Mata temple is an architectural masterpiece. Other places, which are definitely worth a visit are Nathdwara temple, outside Udaipur, the Eklingji temple and the Birla Mandir in Jaipur. **HAI**



Ajmer Sharif Dargah

# Sustainability- How to Say It Again?

Sustainability is a way of life, a comprehensive whole of many activities and should not be confused with the parts. Acceptance of "responsibility" by each is the foundation of any sustainable strategy.

**By MP BEZBARUAH**

Secretary General, Hotel Association of India



**"Everything that needs to be said has already been said. But since no one was listening, everything must be said again."**

*André Gide*

**T**his quote aptly sums up the problem of talking about sustainability. It has been much discussed, many global pronouncements have been made, the latest being the Sustainable Development Goals which provides "a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future".

No doubt sustainability has been at the centre of global concern for some time now, but this concern has been couched in terms of the "future" until Covid-19 brought the world to a grinding halt. The landmark 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, is captioned as "Our Common Future" and it defines sustainable development as "...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs". Five years later in 1992 in Earth Summit in Rio, 182 governments agreed on lists of actions that were embodied in 40 chapters and 115 different programs called Agenda 21, touted as the blueprint for a sustainable planet in the 21st century. Twenty years later the world leaders met again to review the progress only to find that there were grave unmet commitments and they framed a new blueprint still looking to the future--"the Future we want."

Perhaps the world was on denial. Eight years after Rio, when 60,000 activists, heads of government, policy planners and academicians met in Johannesburg to talk about sustainable development, President Chirac exclaimed: "Awareness of our failure to act should lead us, here in Johannesburg, to global alliance for sustainable development...Our

house is burning down and we are blind to it. Nature, mutilated and overexploited, can no longer regenerate and we refuse to admit it." Much later, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had to remind that climate change was real and was fast approaching.

The pandemic has made the world realise, ruefully, that the Future we talked about, Is Now.

The past experience of global action for a sustainable future was marred by failure to match commitments and achievements. The review of achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), after a decade of its launch made a dismal reading on almost all goals. In respect of biodiversity loss, "the world has missed the 2010 target ...with potentially grave consequences." The review sadly sums up that " the window of opportunity is rapidly narrowing and the political will remains largely absent".

There is much hope about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but there is also apprehension that the cycle of gap between "the idea and the action" will continue. India has shown that given the will the world can make a change. At the Paris Climate Summit, India pledged that 40% of its power capacity would come from non-fossil sources by 2030. This target has been met nine years ahead of schedule.

While global goals are important it is now time for action to shift to where action starts—the individual and the community. "Together we can" the Rio Earth Summit had declared and it had visioned that the "together" action would start with Local Agenda 21. That beginning was not made and now the experience of the pandemic has driven home the lesson that the world cannot ignore the warnings anymore.

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Local Agenda 21 was the core of the Earth Summit. Translated into simple words, it says that while the issue of sustainability is global and should be fought together, there is no one solution for everyone, that the people should themselves work out what is good for them based on the felt needs. HAI sees its role in igniting that spark of action through its members in the far-flung corners, through small sustainable practices and initiatives which add up to an avalanche of action. HAI members have done sterling work to set examples of sustainable business practices but as the industry is composed of 80% SMEs, the message needs to go farther and deeper.

UNWTO, while assessing the lessons of Covid-19 that pushed global tourism back by 30 years, found sustainability to be the most unavoidable and essential component of future tourism business. UN General Assembly, in an unprecedented gesture, convened a Debate on "Putting sustainable and resilient tourism at the heart of an inclusive recovery". The tourism fraternity, in its Tbilisi declaration for sustainable recovery of tourism for the people, for the planet and for prosperity identified two specific targets:

- Shifting to a more resource-efficient and carbon-neutral tourism sector in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and SDG 12 in particular
- Monitoring and reporting CO2 emissions from tourism operations and accelerating the decarbonization of tourism operations.

Tourism and climate change have a two-way relationship. Climate is a key resource for tourism and the sector is highly sensitive to the impacts of climate change and global warming. On the other hand, tourism activities were estimated to contribute some 5% of global CO2 emissions. The Davos declaration of 2007, on Climate Change and Tourism, had provided the benchmark for global action to face the challenges, like:

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Taking leadership in implementing concrete measures (such as incentives) to mitigate climate change throughout the tourism value chain.

- Taking steps to reduce risk to travellers, operators and infrastructure due to dynamic climate variability and shift.
- Establish targets and indicators to monitor progress.
- Promote and undertake investments in energy-efficiency tourism programmes and use of renewable energy resources, to reduce the carbon footprint of the tourism sector.
- Achieve carbon-free environments by diminishing pollution through design & operations.
- Raise awareness among customers and staff on climate change impacts and engage them in response processes.

However, few fundamentals need to be kept in mind. First, sustainability is much more than climate change. Second, there is need for clarity in setting goals and using different expressions like carbon neutral, zero carbon, zero emission, carbon net zero etc. Third, sustainability is a way of life, a comprehensive whole of many activities and should not be confused with the parts. For example, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, nature tourism—are all important parts of the sustainability approach but they do not make the whole.

The World Tourism Day theme of Rethinking Tourism among others put people and planet first, highlighted the role of all the stakeholders—the government, business and the community. Acceptance of "responsibility" by each is the foundation of any sustainable strategy. One can imagine what a responsible and sustainable demand from the more than 2000 m domestic tourists can do to spread sustainable practices by the industry. There is hope in the horizon—every single consumer survey after Covid 19 has shown that majority of consumers are alive o the sustainable issues and take that into consideration while making their choices.

This issue of Engage identifies, much wider programmes for action and searches for simple solutions at the grassroot levels. Small things like use of water, electricity, renewable resources, preventing wastages when all added together can make the difference.

However, no one prescription can cover the gamut of action needed to start a safe, sustainable journey for the future. Sustainable ethos should be the credo of the industry and the rest would be taken care of by individual ingenuity, innovations and initiatives. **HAI**



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