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# hotelier *india*

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL HOTEL MANAGEMENT

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# MEN ON A

THE HOTEL ASSOCIATION OF INDIA (HAI) LENDS ITS BROOM TO THE SWACHH BHARAT MISSION, WITH VIKRAM OBEROI, PRESIDENT, HAI AND COO & JOINT MD OF EIH LTD AND RAKESH SARNA, VP, HAI AND MD & CEO OF IHCL, LEADING THE SWEEPING CHANGE

*By Shafquat Ali*

*"Swachh Bharat has multiple impacts. It is not just a fad or a slogan. It changes people's mindsets. It changes our lifestyle. Swachhata becomes a habit... The mantra for Independence was Satyagraha. And the warriors were Satyagrahis. The mantra for new age India must be Swachhagraha. And the warriors will be Swachhagrahis... Take the case of tourism. It is currently an untapped economic activity. But tapping it requires a Swachh Bharat."*

— Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his inaugural address at The Economic Times Global Business Summit 2015, New Delhi, January 16, 2015

Three months after Modi launched his Swachh Bharat Abhiyan on October 2, 2014 (Gandhi Jayanti) and administered the Swachh Bharat pledge to the nation from Rajpath, the PM once again took the opportunity to articulate his mission statement before an august gathering of business visionaries, industry leaders and corporate think tanks. Delivered in Modi's no-nonsense style, his message was simple and direct. Not surprisingly, it touched all the right chords.

Billed as the most ambitious attack on the squalor in India, the Swachh Bharat Mission is also the country's biggest-ever cleanliness drive. In the publicity campaign surrounding the mission, Modi not only inspired and urged countrymen but also scolded and set targets. "I ask all of you to devote at least 100 hours of your time every year to achieve the goal of a clean India," he implored.

Broom in hand, the PM is leading the campaign that aims to make India clean by 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, from the front. The campaign includes sweeping, removal of garbage, debris and unauthorised encroachments from roads, markets and residential areas.

Of course, Modi quickly pointed out that the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan was above politics – "this is purely due to our love for the nation," he reiterated. But, at the same time, the PM had ready statistics to support the campaign so as to avoid it being seen just as an emotional plea. "According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) report, poor sanitation costs every Indian Rs6,500 per year," he stated. "Don't trust me or my government but trust Mahatma Gandhi's dream for a clean India!"

The tourism industry, in general, and the hospitality industry, in

particular, know only too well the significance of a clean India. "A clean India can also bring in more tourists, thereby augmenting the country's revenue," Modi said, as a matter of fact.

"We feel bad when international tourists encounter dirt, garbage or beggars on the streets and, instead of going back with good memories of the natural beauty of this country they return with a negative impression of India," added Mahesh Sharma, Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Not surprising then that, according to government data for 2013, India's share of international tourist arrivals was just 0.64%. The country ranked 42nd in world tourist arrivals and 16th in world tourism receipts. To add insult to injury, the data also pointed out that China was much ahead of India in terms of foreign tourist arrivals, getting 55.7 million tourists in 2013. The figure was 26.5 million for Thailand, 60.7 million for Spain and 69.8 million for the US.

"Our total inflow of international tourists is about 7.2 million and we want to double it by next year but we are lagging behind," informed Sharma. He admitted that the three things needed to attract more tourists were "cleanliness, safety and hospitality".

There is no denying that if India intends to double the number of foreign tourists and achieve its target of attracting 1% share of global tourism arrivals in 2015 compared with its share of 0.64% in 2013,



# MISSION



*We all felt that we should get behind our PM and clean the country... The issue now is whether the drive is sustainable or is it just a photo opportunity? The answer is: it is sustainable and we will keep going because everyone is behind this."*

*Rakesh Sarna, VP, HAI and MD & CEO, IHCL*

*Each of our member hotels is doing all that it can to make a difference. The association is committed to sustaining our efforts and I am confident that this will encourage others to further contribute, leading to a clean nation."*

*Vikram Oberoi, president, HAI and COO & joint MD, EIH Ltd*





*HAI member hotels are taking significant initiatives for the success of Swachh Bharat Mission as the need arises. They are installing transparent dustbins to eliminate the risk of hazardous objects being placed in them, replacing broken slabs on pavements, removing posters and graffiti from city walls, restoring bus-stop shelters, adopting roads and parks, etc."*  
**RK Puri, secretary general, HAI**

it has to display far higher levels of hygiene and cleanliness at least in its top tourist destinations. It has to act fast to change the global perception of India as a dirty country.

Modi's Swachh Bharat Mission seems to be the answer. "Swachh Bharat will give additional teeth to tourism attractiveness," Lalit Panwar, secretary, Ministry of Tourism, opined. "To carry forward the campaign, the Tourism Ministry has taken the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan to also include Swachh Pakwan (food), Swachh Smarak (monuments) and Swachh Paryatan (tourism) – important takeoffs from the central theme."

The prime minister is very tourism friendly," Panwar pointed out. "He has repeatedly mentioned tourism in his list of priorities for the country; he is talking about tourism in every platform — and hospitality is an integral part of tourism. Hence, this is the right time for the hospitality sector to make a strong case and address its problems."

"Also, this is a golden opportunity for the hospitality industry to step up as initiatives like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan are long-term game changers." However, Panwar went on to raise an important question: "Is the hospitality industry ready for the challenge?"

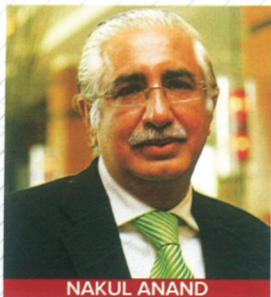
If the way the Hotel Association of India (HAI), the national hoteliers' forum, has immediately responded to the PM's clarion call for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is anything to go by, then the answer to Panwar's question is a firm yes. In what the industry calls a first-of-its-kind initiative, 230 member-hotels of HAI – including 170 major players – at 80 locations across the country have pledged that more than 500 of their employees will clean about 230 km of road around their hotels.

"The HAI has embraced the Prime Minister's Swachh Bharat campaign," said Vikram Oberoi, COO and joint MD of EIH Ltd, who is also the president of the HAI. "It is a big country and the only way a movement resonates beyond just lip service is when everybody embraces it. So, each of our member hotels is doing all that it can to make a difference. The association is committed to sustaining our efforts and I am confident that this will encourage others to further contribute, leading to a clean nation. I have nothing but praise for the commitments of our people at Oberoi and Trident hotels for keeping the area surrounding their hotel clean at all times."



## ‘This is an extension of our responsible luxury ethos’

Nakul Anand, corporate member, Executive Committee, HAI and executive director, ITC Ltd, says each ITC property is promoting the campaign in its own unique manner



NAKUL ANAND

Our participation in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is an extension of our 'responsible luxury' ethos, which, in addition to creating luxury experiences for our guests, is also aimed at actualising ITC's objectives of creating a larger societal impact and making a meaningful contribution to society.

We initiated the campaign across all our hotels in November 2014. Each hotel has come up with its own unique manner in which it has promoted the campaign.

In addition to the 'responsible luxury' initiatives that we do, our associates also undertook activities such as plantation and sanitation drives, education of the underprivileged, etc.

The best practices are shared by associates through our internal communication systems with a recognition system in place.

ITC Hotels' associates are eco-sensitised and participate in community building exercises on an on-going basis.

In addition to what we have completed, there are a number of proposed activities.

At one of our hotels envisaged to be opened soon,



The ITC Maurya team devotes two hours every Saturday for the drive.

we are in the process of evaluating the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan campaign across a 9km village stretch en route to the hotel. This will be done along with the local community to build engagement and ownership. We will then organise village walks for residents of our resort in the area to encourage locals to sustain the drive.

As part of our endeavours to create sustainable livelihoods for the local community, we are already engaged with local farmers in the area and source fresh, seasonal and local produce for our resort, thus also minimising our carbon footprint.

↓ All employees across hotels at The Oberoi Group have taken the "Swachhta Pledge" with a personal commitment to cleanliness. "The general manager of each hotel has taken responsibility of not only educating and spreading awareness about the initiative but also leading by example, by actively participating with team members during the cleanliness drive," Oberoi explained.

A small team comprising up to five people is responsible for the day-to-day cleaning of roads, walkways, etc. within 500 m of the hotel. Some hotels have now extended this to a kilometre. Cleaning drives are also carried out regularly with a large number of hotel employees participating. Each hotel has identified locations to install garbage bins.

"The public has been very supportive of Oberoi and Trident hotels during their cleanliness drives," said Oberoi. "In many cases, employees are cheered, photographed and thanked by passersby. Given the positive response we continue to receive, our people are approaching nearby stores, banks and offices, requesting their help in keeping the entrances of their establishments clean. We will internally recognise and reward hotels that achieve the best results towards a Swachh Bharat."



## ‘For us, Swachh Bharat is a daily exercise’

Priya Paul, corporate member, Executive Committee, HAI and chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Hotels, constantly audits and reviews cleanliness efforts



PRIYA PAUL

The Park Hotels, in solidarity with the Hotel Association of India, participated in the biggest-ever national cleanliness drive in India, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan kick-started on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti.

On October 2, 2014, the employees of The Park Hotels all across India took the pledge for a 'Swachh Bharat, Swasthya Bharat'. This is a promise to be more aware about our environment, help each other in improving the overall cleanliness, and ensuring the well-being of the community



## 'The campaign will elevate India's global standing'

Vivek Nair, CMD, The Leela Group, is focused on converting entire neighbourhoods and the natural environs into green and clean havens



VIVEK NAIR

The Leela Group's founding chairman, the late Captain CP Krishnan Nair, truly believed that a great nation is judged by many factors, including the hospitality it extends to the world. This is why the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan campaign is not a one-day activity for us.

It is a mission as deep as our enduring commitment towards protecting our environment. A clean India will not only enhance the quality of life for every Indian and cultivate national pride, but given the growth potential of tourism in our country, it will also transform the experience of every guest visiting India, multiply the share of international tourists and elevate India's global standing as a tourism destination.

This is why the entire Leela family, across all eight hotels in prime urban cities and resorts, has taken a pledge to support this cause. Our teams across the country have gone about activities such as placing dustbins in neighbouring areas, managing the sorting and responsible disposal of hundreds of kilograms of garbage, dedicating hundreds of man hours towards picking up litter and sweeping the streets and public spaces. We also help local authorities clean up the country's oldest artificial lake,



The Leela Palace Chennai team sweeps the city's streets clean.

Lake Pichola in Udaipur, and initiate continuous beach-cleaning drives.

The group has also appointed a Leela team to keep the Kovalam beach pristine all through the year. We have also focused on empowering communities with hygiene kits that include a mop, broom, and soap whilst raising awareness about the importance of hygienic practices through educational programming. As we strive to reach new levels of corporate social responsibility, we are proud to join the national 'Clean India Mission' and help make a difference.



The Park, New Delhi staff members turn out in full strength in support of the campaign.

at large. This was followed by team members cleaning the pavement and picking garbage in and around the hotel as well as the entire stretch of areas that were adopted.

Posters with 'non-littering' instructions have been put up outside the hotels, nearby railway stations and bus stops in all towns and cities that we have a presence.

This is an exercise that is conducted on a daily basis and each hotel has created its own Swachh Bharat Abhiyan team as well, wherein they take measures to ensure the stretch of areas adopted by them are kept clean. Each month, these areas are then inspected by other members from the hotel to review and audit their efforts.



## 'We believe that together we can make a difference'

Jyotsna Suri, corporate member, Executive Committee, HAI and CMD, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, believes cleanliness will become a habit passed on to the upcoming generation



JYOTSNA SURI

'Cleanliness is next to Godliness' – Mahatma Gandhi communicated this exemplary message to the nation through his efforts to educate people about the significance of a clean environment. He wished to see a clean India, where people work together toward turning every corner of the country clean and green.

The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, in association with the HAI, has participated in the biggest-ever cleanliness drive, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, envisioned by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi with a dream of a clean India by 2019.

All 11 Lalit properties across India have been contributing enthusiastically towards attaining the goal of Swachh Bharat. Our employees clean pavements, pick up garbage from the hotels' vicinity, clean airport taxi stands and public toilets on a regular basis.

During the floods in Srinagar, our team volunteered and selflessly participated in cleanliness drives in the city. To lift the spirit of our employees for taking the campaign forward with greater zeal, we even did a poster-making contest on Swachh Bharat.

We believe that together we can make a difference. To make it possible, The Lalit team also visited schools



Employees of The Lalit Mumbai chose to clean up a taxi stand.

and undertook a 6-km exercise in Khajuraho, educating people about the importance of Swachh Bharat and encouraging them to use public toilets instead of polluting the environment.

We have also been maintaining public toilets at Jantar Mantar and Hawa Mahal in Jaipur since 2010, Bhaisasur Ghat at Varanasi since 2013 and constructed public toilets at Singhpur near Khajuraho in 2012. This Abhiyan will not only help inculcate the habits of cleanliness in the present generation but also make the upcoming generation inherit the habit, making it a significant part of Indian culture in the coming years.

↓ Oberoi added: "HAI, with its abiding commitment to initiatives of social inclusion like spreading the message of World Environment Day, World Hand Hygiene Day, Maintenance of National Monuments, etc. considers it a great opportunity for partnership with the government for a good national cause. The pledge taken on October 2, 2014, would remain an article of faith in the heart and mind of each hotel employee."

He went to say that the Oberoi Group will extend the Swachh Bharat campaign to suppliers, asking them too to participate in this important national initiative.

Towards this end, while the HAI member hotels have responded to the call for clean surroundings with brooms and mops, they are increasingly using more sophisticated equipment to maintain hygiene and cleanliness inside their own premises, using technologies and systems from global hygiene vendors. Take Ecolab, for example, its food safety programme includes a training tool featuring a fluorescent lotion and glow box that shows kitchen staff the areas on their hands that were not properly cleaned!

Vishal Sharma, VP and GM, Ecolab India, also expects the company's water treatment programme to generate more interest from the hospitality industry, what with its focus on monitoring water quality in real time. With quality assurance programmes for



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'Clean India' will go a long way to boost the hospitality industry. Tourism and hospitality go hand-in-hand and it is commendable that the HAI's 230 member hotels have come forward to join the Swachh Bharat campaign."

Mahesh Sharma, Union Minister of State for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation

food safety and brand protection, companies such as Ecolab hope to help the hospitality industry move towards best-practices hygiene routine faster.

Like Modi, the HAI president set the tone by leading by example. He picked up the broom and pushed the wheelbarrow along with his cousin Arjun Oberoi, chief planning officer and joint MD, EIH Ltd, and some employees to collect garbage along the streets of Civil Lines in New Delhi. In fact, the



## 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is a lifeline for us hoteliers'

KB Kachru, fellow member, Executive Committee, HAI and chairman, Carlson Hotels (South Asia), says the campaign would give much-needed impetus to India's tourism industry



KB KACHRU

Nostalgic memories of our childhood when we swept and cleaned our classrooms have become national reality. Our endeavour is to actively contribute to social development of the communities we work in, and we take immense pride in supporting the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

We strongly believe that Swachh Bharat Abhiyan would give an impetus to India's tourism industry and will also bring about the paradigm shift of our country's global perception. This campaign is certainly a lifeline for us hoteliers. Carlson's attempt to make India a cleaner destination is truly reflected with our commitment towards Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. We have institutionalised the initiative by encouraging our hotels to adopt at least four streets within 500 m of their vicinity and being responsible for their upkeep and cleanliness. We initiated this campaign that included area identification for adoption, followed by defining the framework for engagement through partnership and ensure long-term sustainable interventions.

We are committed to this mission by spreading awareness on hygiene and sanitation and are extremely ex-



Radisson Blu Marina Hotel Connaught Place team has adopted the CP area.

cited to share that more than 50 Carlson Rezidor Hotels in India (across all our brands: Radisson Blu, Radisson, Park Plaza, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson and Park Inn by Radisson) have participated with immense fervour. This substantial participation has gained applause from the communities around our properties. Thousands of enthusiastic team members across different levels wholeheartedly joined hands as we embarked upon various exciting initiatives.

Looking to the future, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group is dedicated to take this vision and dream of a clean India forward. The entire family takes pride to declare our active involvement in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

motley group went beyond just the cleaning process and even started painting the walls in their vicinity.

The HAI member hotels, too, were quick to respond. Many others joined five-star properties like ITC Maurya and Taj Palace in New Delhi and The Leela Mumbai, who have initiated cleanliness drives for years and beautified the areas around their hotels. Hundreds of employees from both luxury and budget hotels chains are now cleaning roads around their premises as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

"HAI member hotels are taking significant initiatives for the success of Swachh Bharat Mission as the need arises," said RK Puri, secretary general, HAI. "They are installing transparent dustbins to eliminate the risk of hazardous objects being placed in them, replacing broken slabs on pavements and walkways, removing posters and graffiti from city walls, restoring bus-stop shelters, adopting roads and parks, etc. An HAI member hotel in Agra, the Clarks Shiraz, has offered to build two toilets in a girl's school located close by. Several HAI member hotels have also been motivated by the Swachh Vidyalaya Campaign and are expected to donate funds to the Swachh Vidyalaya Kosh for building of toilets for girl students in the schools."

Interestingly enough, each hotel is working on the cleanliness project as a single unit by setting its own individual goals. While

## 'The teams take to the street every week'

Patu Keswani, fellow member, Executive Committee, HAI and CMD, The Lemon Tree Hotel Company, is proud to add to the cleanliness drive



PATU KESWANI

neighbourhood.

The Swachh Bharat campaign is an important national campaign by the Government of India, covering over 4,000 cities

Lemon Tree Hotels has taken a pledge to be an active participant in the Swachh Bharat (Clean India) campaign and team members from our 26 hotels in 15 cities across three brands (Lemon Tree Premier, Lemon Tree Hotels and Red Fox Hotels) took this pledge on October 2, 2014. The teams take to the streets every week and proudly clean up the adopted area in the



## 'Swachh Bharat is now a way of living'

Anil Madhok, fellow member, Executive Committee, HAI and MD, Sarovar Hotels, says the hospitality industry is seeing the drive as a dedicated activity



ANIL MADHOK

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to the nation for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, there has been an over-enthusiastic sentiment, both within organisations and among individuals all over the country.

With the HAI driving this further with its partner hotels, the hospitality industry is seeing this beyond a CSR drive — rather a dedicated activity, imbibing it as a way of living. Sarovar Hotels, which is a multi-brand leading hotel management company, has a strong portfolio of 70 hotels across 48 destinations, with many more currently under development. And Sarovar has positively taken up this initiative of changing the perspective of citizens towards hygienic conditions and cleanliness.

Various categories of hotels — from budget to five-star — are a part of this 'Clean India' drive and have extended this further by taking up responsibility of regularly cleaning and maintaining more than just the immediate environs of the hotels. For instance, in Siliguri, West Bengal, we are involved in cleaning the 120-m Sevoke Road from the hotel towards north Bengal while at Faridabad, our hotel regularly maintains the 30,000 sq-ft green area



Associates at Sarovar's hotel in Siliguri take up the drive with enthusiasm.

of the municipality in the vicinity. At Vayalar, Kerala, our hotel regularly maintains the 260 m stretch of the Vayalar Ettupurakkal Road right from the entrance of the resort till the Vayalar Koyikkal Devi Temple.

Similarly, at locations in Kochi, Rajkot, Solapur, Delhi, Gurgaon, Pune, Bengaluru, Goa, Ludhiana, and many more, various properties in these towns and cities are maintaining notable stretches of areas not only in and around their respective premises, but also much beyond their immediate surroundings.



A team from Red Fox Hotel Delhi Airport cleans the area near the Aerocity metro station.

and towns to clean the streets, roads and infrastructure of the country. This campaign was officially launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi by cleaning a road himself and is India's biggest-ever cleanliness drive. It aims to accomplish the vision of 'Clean India' by October 2, 2019, Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary.

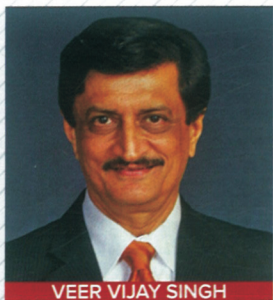
The Lemon Tree Group has set up teams in each hotel that follow a weekly plan to take their cleaning equipment and gear out to adopted areas and spend a few hours sweeping, cleaning and disposing of waste from those areas.

These adopted areas are in Ahmedabad, Aurangabad, Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Chennai, Dehradun, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Kerala, New Delhi, Noida and Pune.



## ‘The focus is on involving a cross-section of staff’

Veer Vijay Singh, member, Executive Committee, HAI and COO, Vivanta by Taj Hotels & Resorts, believes Swachh Bharat Abhiyan's message resonates with the company's own personality



VEER VIJAY SINGH

Vivanta by Taj Hotels and Resorts, as entrusted by its parent company's vision, leaves no stone unturned in making community well-being a part of its modern philosophy and vibrant personality. We formally adopted the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan from October 2, 2014 across our hotels.

A few examples of the activities undertaken were street cleaning by associates at Vivanta by Taj, Bekal, Kerala, where the adjoining roads leading to the property were spruced up, reiterating the message of spreading community well-being, civic sense and hygiene.

Due to the storm that hit Mumbai on September 30, 2014, many trees in the vicinity were uprooted in the rear garden maintained by Vivanta by Taj, President, Mumbai and on the side access to the rear entrance. Even as the municipality authorities were busy clearing other areas, the hotel staff got together and worked towards clearing the garden area and the periphery sidewalk.

Vivanta by Taj, Madikeri, Coorg, is located in the Western Ghats which are also home to one of the rare rainforests of the world and has been categorised as an eco-hotspot by UNESCO. This hotel has a unique responsibility of



Vivanta by Taj, MG Road Bangalore team members take the pledge.

being the custodian of its property's forest. The campaign was launched successfully when a motley crowd stepped forward to clean up the polluted forest.

Similarly, Vivanta by Taj – Dal View, Srinagar has undertaken the responsibility of keeping the road, the route to the Tulip garden and the lake clean and well maintained while Vivanta by Taj MG Road, Bangalore has initiated an 'adopt the mile' endeavour. Besides undertaking various innovative and environment uplifting projects, the focus has been to involve a cross-section of staff in this noble cause. The campaign is successfully led by GMs and heads of departments.

some chains have entrusted general managers to take charge and chalk out cleaning activities, others have given the responsibility to clean surrounding areas, nearby railway stations or public toilets around monuments to staff members.

"The HAI has already commenced its efforts to take the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan to the next level by joining Swachh Smarak Abhiyan and Swachh Vidyalaya Campaign," informed Puri. "The HAI has identified 34 public monuments in 23 cities located in the vicinity of its member hotels that can undertake the responsibility of the cleanliness and enhancement of their tourist amenities. The association has conveyed its offer to the Ministry of Tourism on whose request the Ministry of Culture has advised Archaeological Survey of India to enter into an MoU with the concerned hotels in respect of four public monuments in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, in the first instance. The modalities of this arrangement are being worked out.

"In addition, the HAI has appealed to its member hotels to participate in the Swachh Vidyalaya Campaign for providing gender segregating toilets in schools in their vicinity. The HAI's appeal has evoked positive response from the members, kickstarting with an HAI member hotel volunteering to build two toilets in a girl's school in Sultanpura area of Agra."



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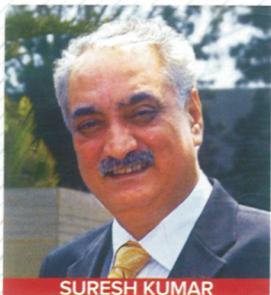
The PM has repeatedly mentioned tourism in his list of priorities for the country — and hospitality is an integral part of tourism... This is also a golden opportunity for the hospitality industry to step up as initiatives like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan are long-term game changers.”  
Lalit Panwar, secretary, Ministry of Tourism

We all felt that we should get behind our PM and clean the country," added Rakesh Sarna, VP, HAI and MD & CEO, Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL). "The issue now is whether the drive is sustainable or is it just a photo opportunity? The answer is: it is sustainable and we will keep going because everyone is behind this. Now we are contemplating taking this drive to the next level by enforcing conditions that we will only do business with vendors who keep their premises clean."



## 'We are attaching the highest priority to this drive'

Suresh Kumar, member, Executive Committee, HAI and CEO, Fortune Hotels, believes the campaign presents a great opportunity to build the global perception of India as a clean destination



SURESH KUMAR

The Indian hospitality industry applauds this initiative of the government, which is aimed to provide additional source of employment, enhance generation of foreign exchange and reduce health costs. The drive will also align itself with the government's initiative to attract more foreign tourists into India.

We firmly believe that the drive presents a great opportunity to build the global perception of India as a clean destination and, hence, Fortune Hotels decided to attach the highest levels of priority to it, thereby initiating actions towards this direction.

The drive was formally flagged off at all Fortune hotels with a pledge taken on October 2, 2014 and, as part of this drive, all 44 operational properties across the country have prepared schedules for specific days of the week and deployed staff to carry out cleaning effectively. Hotels have



Fortune Park D.J. Avenue, New Delhi deploys associates as per schedules.

also coordinated this activity with local authorities, wherever applicable, for this purpose. Further, our hotels have identified surrounding areas in the vicinity and initiated cleanliness and maintenance in close proximity areas as per the specifically designed schedule.

It is important to note that the Swachh Bharat drive will be an on-going practice at all Fortune hotels and shall continue to receive attention on a regular basis.

“We now have a leader who is not afraid to speak up on matters that are normally an embarrassment to our culture,” he added. “But I think the question that remains to be asked is what we are going to do about it? However, I am hopeful of the future. And all the hope that I have stems from our leader's call to clean up our country, our leader's call to make it easy for tourists to come, our leader's call to make it easy for us to do business. There is a man pleading 1.2 billion people to come together. We should all come forward.”

Sarna further implored, “We need to be proud and we need to make our country proud. We need to create an atmosphere where we don't have 7 million people coming to our country when Thailand has nearly 30 million. That's embarrassing. But we should stop being embarrassed and do something about it. And all that will bring the optimistic future we all aspire for. Right now, there is tremendous hope; there is tremendous momentum. We need to take this and translate this into some measurable results. I believe as we do this one step at a time, we will become the country we deserve to be.”

With Sarna at the helm, it is hardly surprising that the Taj Group is doing more than its fair share to offer foreign tourists the best experience while striving to maintain the highest standards of hygiene and sanitation.

“Our associates' endeavour to keep every part of the hotel, including its surrounding areas, clean,” said Sarna. “This is part of our efforts to help contribute towards the development of the destinations in which we operate hotels.”

Take Taj Lake Palace Udaipur, for instance. Since 1998, the hotel has endeavoured to clean Lake Pichola on a daily basis.

The hotel collects an average of 200 kg of debris and weeds every day, amounting to 73 tonnes per year! Similarly The Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai, strives to clean the peripheries of the Gateway of India daily.

“With the initiation of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, many of our hotels have deployed special teams, who regularly inspect different internal and external areas of the hotels including its peripheries,” informed Sarna. “If an area is in need of enhancement, the teams tackle the task at hand immediately.”

Moving on, he spelt out the larger picture. Echoing the PM's message, Sarna said that this not just an emotional issue. “Everything we are talking about in terms of cleaning our backyard, in terms of cleaning our monuments... They will all help bring more people to the country and augment the country's revenue,” he reiterated.

“Since the launch of visa on arrival enabled by Electronic Travel Authorisation for citizens of 43 countries in India on November 27, 2014, the government has issued 32,000 visas online – this only means more foreign travellers in the country,” reiterated Tourism Minister Manish Sharma. “Thus, the hotels need to be ready and ‘Clean India’ will go a long way to boost the hospitality industry. Tourism and hospitality go hand-in-hand and it is commendable that the HAI's 230 member hotels have come forward to join the Swachh Bharat campaign. It is certainly a welcome step.”

As the HAI's member hotels get together to usher in a Swachh Bharat, there is every reason to think that the good times are here for the hospitality industry. There is room for change. There is broom for optimism. ■



