



# ENGAGE

Sep-Oct 2023 | Volume 3 | Issue 5

## SUSTAINABILITY

### INDIAN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY SHOWS ITS NURTURING SIDE WITH CARE FOR PEOPLE & PLANET



Visionary pioneer  
**PRS OBEROI**  
leaves behind an  
enduring legacy



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— Magsaysay award winner  
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## From the President's Desk



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

Government and businesses across the world acknowledge that sustainability is the key to a better future and the hospitality industry is no exception. Today, Environmental, Social and Governance criteria (ESG) are increasingly on the minds of companies, investors, regulators and also consumers who expect hotels to assume their responsibility and conduct the business sustainably. However, it is more than just going green and managing impact on the environment, it is also about economic progress and social development. Building a sustainable Indian tourism sector is the only way to drive India's journey to being among the top travel and tourism economies in the world. Globally, the growth of travel & tourism continues to outpace the economy. The industry has had a huge multiplicative impact on both, economic development and employment globally. However, the sector also leaves a huge environmental footprint, and awareness about tourism's environmental and social costs is growing 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.

Travel and tourism has always been for the people and by the people. It is a sector that meaningfully changes lives. It not only creates jobs; but reduces poverty and inequality and enriches communities both economically and socially. With its rich biodiversity, culture and heritage, India is at the cusp of transformation as a key travel and tourism destination and developing this sector with a keen eye on sustainability and inclusivity will be key to attaining the next frontier of travel and tourism.

In this ever-evolving narrative, it's crucial to recognize that sustainability is not a choice, it is a necessity. Industries worldwide are no longer just about profit margins; they're about sustainable, inclusive, and accountable operations. In this Edition, we are thrilled to bring you an array of thought-provoking pieces that underscore this shift. **HAI**



# PRS OBEROI

3 FEBRUARY 1929 - 14 NOVEMBER 2023

## OBEROI FORESAW TRENDS, LEFT A DEEP MARK ON THE HOTELS SECTOR

*Puneet Chhatwal*

Oberoi's legacy is not just in the hotels he built, but in the people he truly inspired and nurtured, writes Chhatwal, CEO of the Taj Group of hotels (Indian Hotels Co. Ltd.), a close competitor of the luxury hospitality group.

In a sombre moment for the world of hospitality, we bid farewell to a titan of the industry, PRS Oberoi, the visionary leader of Oberoi Hotels. His recent passing marks the end of an era in luxury hoteliering, leaving behind a legacy that has shaped and elevated Indian hospitality on the global stage.

Fondly known as 'Biki' Oberoi, he was not just a hotelier, but an inspirational human being and a pioneer, whose remarkable journey in the sector was nothing short of extraordinary. His keen business acumen and unwavering commitment to excellence set the stage for the success of the Oberoi Group.

With a sharp eye on service excellence and professional management, he became a legendary figure known for reading every guest comment and personally stepping in when required.

What truly set Oberoi apart was his ability to foresee trends and introduce groundbreaking concepts. He spotted the trend of luxury hotels and introduced the world to the concept of 'Vilas' offering authentic and grand stays to the connoisseurs.

His impact extended beyond the Oberoi Hotels as he played a pivotal role in transforming the entire hotel industry of the country. In recognition of his exceptional contribution to the country in tourism and hospitality, he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2008.

However, Oberoi's legacy is not just in the hotels he built, but in the people he truly inspired and nurtured. The Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development, founded by him, stands as a testament to his commitment to grooming generations of fine hoteliers. The many lives he touched remember him not just as a leader but as a mentor who shaped their careers and instilled in them the values of excellence and professionalism.

IHCL expresses deep sorrow and extends heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and the entire fraternity. The sentiment is echoed by all those who had the privilege of working alongside him.

Oberoi's indomitable spirit will continue to inspire generations. The profound mark he left on the sector serves as a guiding light for future hoteliers, encouraging them to reach for new heights and uphold the standards of service that he so passionately advocated.

In celebrating the life of Oberoi, we also mourn the loss of a true icon. May his soul rest in eternal peace, and may his vision continue to guide us towards delivering unparalleled experiences that reflect the excellence and passion he brought to the world.

The author is the managing director and chief executive of Indian Hotels Co. Ltd.  
This article was originally published by **Mint** on 14 November 2023.



# *HAI mourns the passing away of founding member and patron-in-chief*

## HAI MEMBERS AND SENIOR LEADERS RECALL THE ICON'S LEGACY

The passing away of Prithvi Raj Singh Oberoi, Chairman Emeritus, of The Oberoi Group on November 14, 2023 has cast a pall of gloom over the industry. He was the founding member and patron-in-chief of the Hotel Association of India (HAI), the apex body of the Indian hospitality industry.

A towering figure of the Hospitality industry, Mr Oberoi's legacy is one of excellence and innovation. He joined the Oberoi Group in 1956 and quickly rose to become the Executive Chairman in 1984. Under his leadership, the Oberoi Group grew from a handful of hotels in India to a global leader in luxury hospitality. A pioneer in the field of human resources and training, he was instrumental in establishing the Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development (OCLD) in 1967. OCLD has trained and educated thousands of hospitality professionals over the years.

Mr Oberoi was the recipient of numerous awards and accolades, including the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian honor, in recognition of his exceptional contribution to the country's tourism and hospitality. He was also a member of the board of directors of several prestigious companies. He is survived by his wife, one son, two daughters, and two grandchildren.

Expressing his deep sorrow, and on behalf of all HAI members, **Puneet Chhatwal**, President HAI and MD and CEO, IHCL said: "Mr Oberoi was a legend, an icon and one of the greatest that the Hospitality sector has seen. He will always be remembered by Indian businesses in general and global hospitality in particular."

**KB Kachru**, Chairman Emeritus and Principal Advisor, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group and Vice President HAI, said: "We are saddened by the passing of PRS Oberoi, a visionary leader who left an indelible mark on the Hospitality industry. Having worked with him on a few projects, I was able to witness his passion for work, creativity, fo-

cused approach, and dedication to do better every time. We are extremely grateful for all his contributions and believe that the legacy he has left behind will inspire each one of us to reach greater heights."

Speaking on the void created by his passing away, **MP Bezbaruah**, Secretary General, HAI said: "Mr Oberoi was a visionary who transformed the Indian hospitality industry. He was the pioneering founding member of HAI and piloted it through the formative years. HAI was proud to have his guidance. One of HAI's most significant milestones is Mr Oberoi's letter to the Hon'ble Prime Minister in July 2019 seeking several key reforms to energise the tourism and hospitality sector as a growth engine for achieving \$5 trillion economy envisaged for India, which was also reflected in the Economic Survey presented in July 2019 and the Union Budget 2019-2020."

**Priya Paul**, Chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Ltd, and founding member, HAI, said: "Truly a giant of our Industry and such a wonderful man! May God bless his soul. I have such beautiful memories of him from the HAI foundation years."

Recalling an incident about a decade ago, ITC executive director **Nakul Anand**, said: "Biki had invited me and my wife to his farmhouse to watch an India-Pakistan cricket match. We were served chicken sandwiches. Oberoi told me this must be the finest sandwich I have ever had. I tasted it and said, 'I beg to differ'. Oberoi then said he didn't think ITC can do better than that! I said 'I never mentioned ITC. I told him about a central Delhi confectionery and he replied saying he had never heard of it. The next day when I sent a box of chicken sandwiches from that confectionery to him, he called to say I was right. We agreed to disagree on many things but agreed on the chicken sandwich! The greatness of the man reflected in his attention to detail."

Expressing her sorrow, **Dr Jyotsna Suri**, Member HAI, Chairperson and MD, Bharat Hotels Limited, said: "The passing of Mr PRS Oberoi, fondly known as Biki

has been a huge loss for the entire hospitality industry. Mr Oberoi's visionary leadership, unwavering commitment to excellence, and relentless passion for raising the standards of hospitality have set a timeless benchmark for all of us in the industry. As we reflect on the legacy of this remarkable leader, his enduring impact is a testament to the profound influence that one visionary leader can have on an entire industry. Lalit and myself had the honour and privilege to know him personally. His insight and knowledge of the industry was unparalleled. We both looked upto him as our role model."

**Patu Keswani**, Member & Hony. Treasurer, HAI, Chairman & MD, Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd, said: "May his soul rest in eternal peace."

**Ranju Alex**, Member HAI and Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International, said: "Mr PRS Oberoi was a leader who has left an indelible mark in the world of hotels and whose wisdom has lit the path most of us now walk. He was not just my mentor, he was my teacher and a guiding light. I will be forever grateful for the profound impact he had on my professional and personal growth over 17 years. Propagating the highest tenets of quality and service, his leadership inspired generations and his business acumen was second to none. Rest in peace Mr Oberoi. Thank you for touching so many lives."

**Ajay K. Bakaya**, Member, HAI & MD, Sarovar Hotels Pvt Ltd, said: "He was uncompromising, whiplash critic, demanding and getting more from his team, he created icons and set the finest quality standards in the world. They remain unparalleled. I am privileged to have learnt so much in his tutelage.

**Sanjay Sethi**, Member, HAI, MD & CEO, Chalet Hotels Ltd, said: "Mr Oberoi was an industry icon from the time I was in college."

**Rohit Khosla**, Member HAI, Executive Vice President (Operations), IHCL, said: "It's a monumental loss of an industry icon. May God bless his soul with peace and give Vikram, Arjun and family the strength to bear this irreplaceable loss."

**JK Mohanty**, Member & Hony. Secretary, HAI & MD, Swosti Premium Ltd, said: "May the noble soul rest in peace. Truly a father figure of the hotel industry is gone. A phenomenal hotelier, he built miles beyond what he inherited from his illustrious father Rai Bahadur.

**Nikhil Sharma**, Member HAI and Market Managing Director Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, said: "On behalf of everyone at Wyndham Hotels and Resorts, I want to extend our deepest condolences for

the loss of Mr Prithvi Raj Singh Oberoi and the impact this loss has had on the Oberoi Group. Mr Prithvi Raj Singh Oberoi was a true visionary to not only the Indian hospitality industry but also to the wider global industry as well. His remarkable leadership and enduring legacy have set a benchmark that continues to inspire us all and his dedication to excellence and innovative approach to luxury hospitality have set an industry standard which resonates with us all. Our thoughts are with his family and the entire Oberoi Group during this difficult time and today the Indian and global hospitality industry is simply poorer."

**Samir M.C.**, Member HAI, MD, Fortune Park Hotels Ltd, said: "Mr PRS Oberoi was an absolute legend. He leaves behind an amazing legacy."

**Rupak Gupta**, Member HAI and MD, UP Hotels Limited, said: "I have very fond memories with Mr Bikki Oberoi, standing in the lobby of Delhi Oberoi Hotel, and asking me how the massage was, when he introduced the Banyan Tree spa, and the masseurs came from Thailand."

**Surinder Singh**, Member HAI & Area Director, IHCL, said: "This news is really sad, end of an era. May his soul rest in peace and may God give his family strength to handle this loss."

**Charulata Sukhija**, Deputy Secretary General, HAI, said: "I joined HAI in 2008 and heard so much about Mr PRS Oberoi. When I did get to meet the legend in person, what struck me most was his smiling face exuding such warmth and goodwill. Over the years I was impressed by his propriety, his vision and his personal attention to things. He initiated the creation of a larger umbrella industry body with a coming together of Associations of stakeholders of all verticals of Tourism. He was deeply concerned about the positioning and promotion of India on the global Tourism map.

The development of a serious media campaign by HAI for the purpose was led by him. He personally sat in for a full day of presentations of the ideas, themes and creatives by several media companies. He would never fail to acknowledge anyone in a meeting or event irrespective of status and role. Ever encouraging, he made time to motivate students, budding professionals and academia. A great professional, a visionary and most importantly a beautiful human being. May he rest in peace."

HAI Executive Committee, each & every HAI Member and team HAI Secretariat mourn the passing away of their legendary leader-An Industry Icon whose contribution will remain etched forever in collective memory. **HAI**



## Sustainability on the Cricket field

At the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023, Coca-Cola India and ICC aimed to bring together the country's excitement for cricket with a commitment towards sustainability. Coca-Cola India and ICC introduced national flags and ICC Unity flags made from post-use PET bottles.

These PET bottles were recycled to produce yarn which was used for the flags. Coca-Cola India thus becomes the first company in the world to introduce recycled PET national flags in the cricket stadium, setting a precedent for future events. Approximately 11,000 PET bottles

were used to make one national flag and approximately 2,000 bottles were used for a single ICC Unity flag. The flags were manufactured by GoRevise, Ganesha Ecoverse Limited, which is engaged in manufacturing recycled yarn and garments. A dedicated team of 100 workers devoted 25 days and over 300 hours to make the recycled flags.

Arnab Roy, Vice President, Marketing, Coca-Cola India & Southwest Asia, said: "CocaCola has a mission to support sustainability efforts as an integral part of all sporting events. Aligned with this mission, we take pride in unveiling the national flags made with recycled PET at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023. With these recycled national and ICC Unity flags, we are dedicated to advancing the principles of a circular economy." With cricket being the biggest sporting event in the country, Coca-Cola India and ICC thus got to show their side of care towards People and the Planet.

## India urges airlines in Vietnam to introduce direct flights to NE states

While addressing a session on investment and trade at the North East India Festival in New Delhi, Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, called upon airlines from Vietnam to consider the possibility of introducing direct flights to cities located in the north-eastern states of India. This proposal aims to bolster economic and tourism opportunities for both nations. Facilitating better connectivity through direct flights could strengthen trade, investment, and cultural exchanges between India's north-east and Vietnam.



## UNWTO launches education toolkit for incorporating tourism as a subject

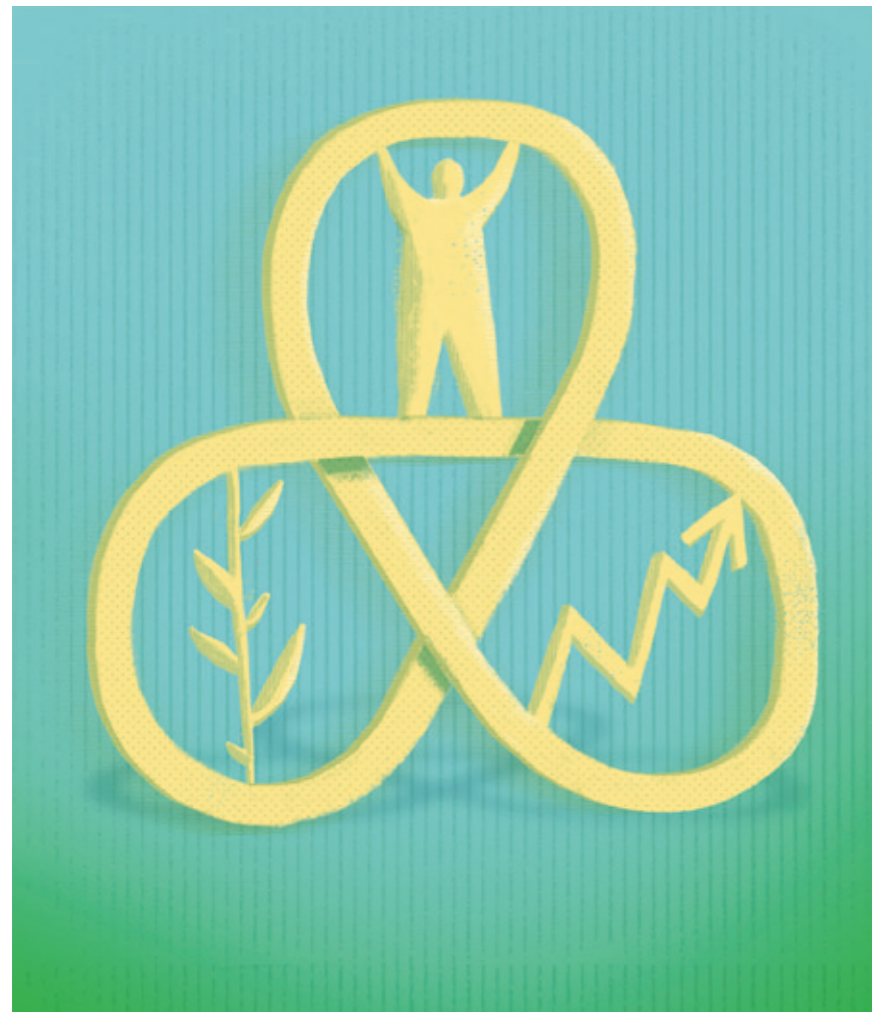
Acknowledging the vital role of tourism in economic and social growth, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) introduced an educational toolkit to integrate tourism into global high school curricula. During the 25th General Assembly of the UNWTO in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili advocated for tourism's inclusion in school subjects and the establishment of additional tourism-focused academies and universities worldwide.

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info@hotelassociationofindia.com  
hai@hotelassociationofindia.com  
www.hotelassociationofindia.com

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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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Jobs set to open up in Hospitality sector



The upcoming months will see a surge in job opportunities in India’s travel, tourism, and hospitality sector, propelled by increased leisure travel during the festive period and a rise in business trips. An estimated 70,000-80,000 positions, encompassing both permanent and temporary roles, are anticipated. This boost in demand is further amplified by the concurrent Cricket World Cup, hosted across 10 cities, as projected by the staffing firm TeamLease.

New Wyndham hotels

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, a global hotel chain, has expanded its presence in India with two new franchise agreements. Yatri Vihar Hospitality Private Limited, known for their diverse offerings in Jharkhand and Bihar, has joined hands with Wyndham to bring “Ramada by Wyndham Bodh Gaya Mahabodhi” to Bihar. The hotel is spread over 3.5 acres and offers 95 guest rooms with upscale amenities, including a double height lobby lounge, all-day dining, and specialty restaurants, as well as an outdoor swimming pool and a fitness area. “We are delighted to expand our offering through this exciting high-quality midscale project in Bodh Gaya under the internationally recognized Ramada by Wyndham brand,” said Amit Roy, Director, Yatri Vihar Hospitality Private Limited.



Signing of Ramada by Wyndham in Bodh Gaya



Signing of Ramada Encore by Wyndham in Ayodhya

In a parallel development, M/S Saryu Ratna Hotel & Resort, a reputed hotel developer from Lucknow, has partnered with Wyndham for the launch of “Ramada Encore by Wyndham” in Ayodhya. “Wyndham Hotels &

Resorts is the largest hotel franchise company in the world, and we are extremely happy to partner with them to introduce Ramada Encore by Wyndham in Ayodhya,” said Mukesh

Jaiswal, Partner, Saryu Ratna Hotel & Resort. These partnerships reinforce Wyndham’s commitment to enhancing its footprint in the Indian subcontinent. **HAI**



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*“If possible, our impact should be positive, not just neutral”*



Magsaysay Award winner, **SONAM WANGCHUK** is an engineer, innovator and education reformer. In an exclusive interview with HAI Engage, he talks about the prevailing decadence, the futility of thinking that what is wasteful is luxury, and how the Ladakhi way of life can teach people to be more caring towards scarce resources.

**What are your thoughts on sustainability?**

Actually, I have issues with the word “sustainability”. For two reasons. Firstly, because sustainability is about sustaining what’s going on, but what’s going on is not good. The ecosystem is on the verge of collapse. In the mountains, we are the first victims, and it’s mainly because of the lifestyle of the people in the big cities. The system is breaking down. Something broken needs to be repaired rather than sustained! So that’s one issue. The point is that we need to change our lifestyle and “restore”, rather than sustain. You know, a healthy person talks about sustaining health, but a sick person should talk about restoring and healing. So we should be talking about

restorative development rather than sustainable development, that’s my view.

**What ideas for change, for a sustainable move ahead, would you suggest, especially for the Hospitality sector?**

While I respect people’s urge to explore, to understand the planet and the world we live in, we must do this in ways that we cause minimum damage, and if possible, try to bring some benefits to the places we travel.

Travel should be done not in ways that destroy the place, but rather in ways to build it up, the effect must not be “zero”, but a positive impact on the place. And for that, you need to look at the way you use resources.

Whether it is water use, energy or materials, food and all the rest that goes into travel, we need to be very, very sensitive about the impact we leave. It’s not enough for the hotels only to be concerned—all that is good—but it should be driven from the demand side, not just the supply side. And, therefore, we need to educate people because educating hoteliers only is not going to be effective, if they will have to bow into the pressures of the demand.

I take it as a mission upon myself to raise awareness about these issues. Go for holidays, but tread gently on the planet, to leave the least carbon footprint.

Our impact should be, if possible positive, and not just neutral.

Regarding the use of resources, let me give an example of the damages caused by extravagance, or so-called decadence. In Delhi, when it is plus 45 degrees outside, don’t use the same down feathers or quilts that one would use in winter in Ladakh! How decadent can that be, how much energy is wasted to keep the temperature to 18 degrees. Now, that’s perhaps what clients demand and the hotels supply, but this needs to change. You need to strike a balance between comfort and ecology.

When we have hot weather in India, we don’t need to imitate New York or London where they have to keep heavy quilts because of the cold, that’s not the same here.

Research has shown that in India, people are thermally comfortable at 25/26 degrees. So where is the need to bring the temperatures down to 18 degrees. So, you could easily raise the thermostat to say 25/26 and be comfortable with some light covering.

How ironic, we first make ourselves

**So it seems there is a psychological pressure to overdo, what we think our clients would like. So you do so much that the client is actually uncomfortable? And nature, of course, is doomed**

**How decadent can it be, to waste energy to keep the temperature to 18 degrees, and then warm yourself up with thick quilts? Now, this is perhaps what clients demand and the hotels supply, but it needs to change. You need to strike a balance between comfort and ecology**

uncomfortable at 45 degrees, and then we go down the other way to make ourselves uncomfortable at 18 degrees and then cover ourselves with heavy quilts. This is not sustainable. I think hotels fear about the demand side. But you have to be bold in the face of climate change, you have to pioneer, take initiatives. Perhaps some hotels could show the way by setting the temperatures at 25 degrees, making people comfortable in one layer rather than needing a whole jacket and coat like in winter, or perhaps in Europe. So this is the level of decadence I am talking about, this needs to change. Similarly, I could not sleep in Ulaanbaatar, where because of the cold outside, they kept the room at plus 28 degrees!

So it seems there is a psychological pressure to overdo, what we think our clients would like. So you do so much that the client is actually uncomfortable? And nature, of course, is doomed. The Mongolian hotel used too much electricity to heat the room with coal-fired power plants, damaging the environment and making me uncomfortable at 28 degrees! Similarly in Delhi or Mumbai, they run heavy air conditioners and make me uncomfortable at 18 degrees! This mentality needs to change! It’s just causing damage to the earth, a lose-all situation. We want to win, not lose in this situation.

But for this, we need to educate people, to not take pleasure in how much the hotel spends to keep us comfortable.

Let me share you some data: for every degree of air conditioning you use, 6% of the electricity budget for every degree goes up. So if you have your room temperature at 20 degrees and you take it to say 25 degrees, you are raising the electricity budget by 30%. We need to come out of such extravagance. This vicious cycle is what we need to break to make our businesses sustainable and beyond sustainable, actually restorative and regenerative.

The same is the case with water.

Why do we need to waste water, washing huge towels every day? I travel with a sheet because hotels don’t provide sheets, they provide quilts. So I travel with a bed sheet and a light cotton towel. I don’t even touch the hotel towel thinking how much water and chemicals they will use to wash them after I check out. So I don’t use their quilts and raise the air conditioning to 25



## Ladakh should become an unforgettable experience that changes you and your life and you take back the lessons of living gently, living sensitively on this planet

degrees and save them costs and energy, nature, pollution and emission.

There might be a whole class of customers who do this as well, and may be some forward-thinking hotels are doing their bit. They could have special rates for eco travellers or have an upgrade or something, to incentivise progressive thinking.

Same is the case with wastage of food, and so on. At every step, I see more needs to be done with customers rather than the hotels. Hotels do what they do because they think that they are pleasing the customer.

### Some ideas from Ladakh that may be replicated elsewhere?

People can get to learn a lot from Ladakh, not because we are great or anything, but because we live in very special circumstances. We have very little water and very little resources. To heal the planet, one needs to learn from such places and not from New York or London because they are extravagant and they waste so much. The whole world imbibes their ways and starts wasting.

Like Mahatma Gandhi said, to run Britain you need the whole planet. If the whole world becomes like New York or London, we will need 50 planets!

People in big cities need to learn to live like we do in Ladakh, managing with 5-10 litres of water a day and not 150 litres a day. This can happen with recycling water and by using it responsibly. I see many good initiatives in many hotels that ask guests if they prefer not to wash the towels, and bedsheets for repeat use.

Many hotels are also providing bottled glass bottles, and that's good.

My brother has a resort in Ladakh. In 2014, we gave up a very lucrative water bottle system in the resort to go in for bottling of spring water. We gave this for free. Now there is a whole new trend, of having bottling plants within the complex. I want to encourage and appreciate such initiatives. In big hotels, there will be thousands of bottles a day that will make to the garbage, and this may be absolutely avoided, so as to live with minimal water. This is what Ladakh's way of life has been. "Make use rather than misuse". In Ladakh if somebody throws away food it is considered shameful and sinful. But in hotels people just take from the buffet as if that's getting the money's worth.

### Do you see any change in the behaviour of the tourists who visit Ladakh?

I see a huge difference. In the past Ladakh was not known to most people. Only the most motivated, sensitive and explorer kind of people visited Ladakh. Moreover coming to Ladakh was not easy. Often you had to take a very rough journey. So only few people used to come. We have a saying in Ladakh, "In the land of high passes like Ladakh, only the best of friends and worst of enemies are visitors."

So we did get the best of friends who were truly and genuinely interested in Ladakh's culture and history and they didn't mind living the life of a Ladakhi. They would expect things to be different and blend well with the people rather than demand to get this or that. They were explorer kind of people, who would take in the challenges because they expected the challenges.

Now we have entered the era of "mass tourism". Big travel companies just gather people who are half-aware, half-educated, who don't even know where they are going. They come in Hawai chappals to the airport and discover that it is so cold and they will be frostbitten, and then they don't even bother about taking rest to acclimatize on the first day. They just go up the passes and then collapse. People who have no preparation for the trip and are ignorant about the culture end up doing more damage.

Such people come not out of love or respect for Ladakh, but just to put up on their social media checklist. This is now mass tourism is, absolutely mindless. So if it is going towards that, I would not like that.

Ladakh should become an unforgettable experience that changes you and your life and you take back the lessons of living gently, living sensitively on this planet. That learning Ladakh could give but only if the clients are made aware, even before they visit. So that is a good challenge. To educate and make people benefit from the visit to Ladakh rather than just spend money, to cater to the tick-box mentality. HAI



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# SUSTAINABLE Hospitality

*Industry shows its nurturing side  
with Care for People & Planet*

In an era defined by unprecedented environmental challenges and a growing awareness of our collective impact on the planet, the concept of sustainability has emerged as a beacon of hope and responsibility. Today, it transcends mere buzzwords and has become a vital imperative for industries across the spectrum. Among these, the Hospitality sector stands at the forefront of change, recognizing its pivotal role in shaping a sustainable future.

Sustainability, at its core, is a commitment to preserve the delicate balance of our planet's ecosystems, while also ensuring the well-being of present and future generations. This ethos has evolved from being a noble aspiration to an undeniable necessity, as we grapple with climate change, resource depletion, and a heightened consciousness of the importance of ethical business practices.

The threat from climate change has been visible across all geographies at different times. Nature, people, lives, and livelihoods are at the heart of climate action. In Hospitality, sustainability isn't merely an option; it's a transformative force that is redefining the industry. From eco-conscious hotels and restaurants championing green practices to travellers seeking experiences that align with their values, sustainability has woven itself into the very fabric of modern Hospitality. This shift isn't just about reducing carbon footprints; it's about reimagining guest

experiences, forging connections with local communities, about inclusivity, and embracing innovations that minimize waste and conserve resources.

Under the Mission LiFE initiative, the Indian Government has introduced 75 lifestyle practices aimed at fostering environmentally beneficial habits. These practices are organized into seven categories: energy conservation, water conservation, minimizing single-use plastic usage, promoting sustainable food systems, waste reduction (swachhata measures), encouraging a healthy lifestyle, and proper e-waste management. To specifically address the reduction of plastic consumption, 11 targeted actions have been recommended, including the preference for using recycled plastic instead of new, untreated plastic wherever feasible.

In this feature, we delve into the multifaceted world of Sustainability in Hospitality. From innovative sustainable design conservation efforts to involving communities, we discover how the Hospitality industry is taking proactive steps to ensure that luxury and responsible stewardship of the People & Planet can go hand in hand. Join us on this journey as we navigate the vital intersection of Sustainability and Hospitality, where passion meets purpose in creating a brighter, more sustainable future for all. Contributors to this section are leading Hospitality experts, who throw lights on the efforts they are making at their Hotels.

**Team HAI Engage**





# SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

**RANJU ALEX**, Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International, outlines the ways through which all Group hotels have endeavoured to reduce carbon emissions



Since inception in 1927, Marriott has placed a high priority on creating a positive impact. With our size and global scale we realize the part we play is instrumental in driving change. We embrace our global responsibility to be a force for good, as demonstrated by our sustainability and social impact platform, Serve 360: Doing Good in Every Direction. We recently published our 2023 Serve 360 Report highlighting data as of year-end 2022, and shared the company's continued progress on the Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) efforts. Marriott integrates sustainability across hotel operations, design, and the supply chain. We minimize our environmental footprint by sustainably managing our energy and water use, reducing waste and carbon emissions and increasing the use of renewable energy. We steer innovative technologies to plan, implement, track and communicate how we operate responsibly to mitigate climate-related risks. Our "Waste Management Program" helps us navigate towards a harmonious coexistence with the eco-system. A few



The St. Regis Goa Resort- Golf Course

initiatives under this program are:

- **Recycling:** Encouraging guests and associates to recycle items such as paper, cardboard, glass, plastic and aluminium
- **Composting:** Setting up compost pits to manage organic waste like that of food and garden trimmings
- **Single-use Plastic Reduction:** Around 30% of our hotels in South Asia have completely eliminated single-use plastics
- **Energy Efficient Lighting:** Replacing traditional lighting with energy-efficient LED bulbs reduces electricity consumption and waste. The Group's 26 hotels in India are currently using renewable energy (RE) for their operations
- **E-Waste Recycling:** Collecting and recycling electronic waste, such as old computers, TVs, and phones, is important to prevent them from ending up in landfills. All hotels have empanelled vendors to dispose e-waste
- **Food Waste Reduction:** Minimizing food waste in kitchens is implemented through improved inventory management, portion control, and composting

**We embrace our global responsibility to be a force for good, as demonstrated by our sustainability and social impact platform, Serve 360: Doing Good in Every Direction**

- **Sustainable Food Sourcing:** Ensuring food is sourced locally reduces transport-related carbon emissions and supports local economies
- **Water Conservation:** Increased use of water-saving technologies like low-flow toilets, faucets, and showerheads, rain-water harvesting and recycling of water is encouraged through STP (Sewage Treatment Plants). The treated water is re-used in washrooms, and public areas across the hotel gardens and landscaping.

Sustainability is embedded into our business strategy. All Group hotels are encouraged to become active advocates of sustainability, sensitizing and influencing guests, partners, communities and governments. **HAI**



# CREATING CARBON IMPACT SYSTEMS

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts is a global leader in the hotel industry. **NIKHIL SHARMA**, Market Managing Director-Eurasia, talks of the Wyndham Green Initiative that ensures that all Hotels in the Group walk the talk.



**F**ollowing the Covid-19 pandemic, travellers worldwide have become conscious of the environmental impact of their journeys. A growing awareness has emerged about the importance of sustainability in travel, from conserving resources like water and power to improving waste management, reducing carbon footprints, addressing climate change, and striving for a more inclusive world.



**The five-level certification encompasses a wide range of sustainability measures, aimed at enhancing energy efficiency, decreasing emissions, conserving water, and minimizing waste**

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has made environmental sustainability a cornerstone of the business philosophy. The Wyndham Green Initiative is designed to actively reduce the ecological footprint of all the hotels in the Group.

The initiative employs a five-level certification program that encompasses a wide range of sustainability measures. These measures are aimed at enhancing energy efficiency, decreasing emissions, conserving water, and minimizing waste. The program has garnered resounding support and enthusiasm, with nearly 80% of Wyndham hotels in Eurasia achieving Level 1 certification. Impressively, 36.2% of the hotels have gone a step further by reaching Level 2 and above. These milestones attest to the successful implementation of various eco-friendly strategies, including monitoring of utility usage, encouragement of recycling practices, adoption of energy-efficient lighting, and the introduction of towel and linen reuse programs.

The Group collaborates closely with the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, a collective effort dedicated to building a more sustainable and inclusive future for all.

Through Wyndham Green and its active participation in global sustainability initiatives, Wyndham not only acknowledges the environmental impact of travel but actively strives to reduce the carbon footprint. **HAI**



# SAVING WATER

Tackling global water scarcity head-on, exemplifies how luxury hospitality can harmoniously converge with responsible water stewardship, pioneering best practices that make a significant difference both within their walls and in the broader community.

Text by **TEAM CHALET HOTELS.**

**T**he Chalet Hotels Group recognizes that sustainability is not just a trend but an imperative for the future. The Group's robust and comprehensive ESG strategy is centred around the purpose of "investing responsibly for sustainable value creation". It is built on three strong pillars supported by a solid governance structure. These pillars encompass Environmental Stewardship, where the focus is on reducing and managing carbon emissions; Water Stewardship, and Waste Management; and Empowering Employees and Communities through employee-centric policies, learning and development opportunities, and diversity & inclusion efforts. In FY23, Chalet achieved remarkable progress, elevating its Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) rating from 31 to 43, representing a notable 39% improvement. Chalet is also a trailblazer in the global hospitality industry, being the first to commit to all three initiatives of the Climate Group: RE100, EP100, and EV100. Chalet has embarked on a journey of decarbonization across the value chain.

Water is a precious resource, and its

responsible use is paramount in a world grappling with water scarcity. The Group has taken concrete steps to ensure efficient water management across all properties.

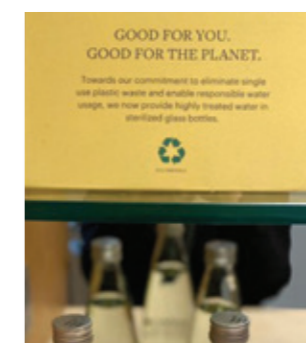
Rainwater harvesting systems are now present in all Chalet properties, encompassing both rainwater storage and recharging mechanisms. This practice enhances the replenishment of groundwater aquifers, ultimately boosting water yield. Water-efficient fixtures like low-flow faucets in guest rooms and common areas help in conserving water.

**The zero-wastewater discharge mechanism for all properties is propelled through sewage treatment plants used to purify wastewater, making it suitable for non-potable uses**

The zero-wastewater discharge mechanism for all properties is propelled through sewage treatment plants (STP) used to purify wastewater, making it suitable for non-potable uses. The total installed STP capacity of the wastewater treatment facility across Chalet properties is 37,50,000 litres/day. Average water treated per day is around 18,75,000 litres, which is equivalent to the water requirement of over 5,000 families on a daily basis. Up to 80% of wastewater across Chalet properties is recycled and reused for horticulture, flushing, housekeeping, and cooling.

Awareness programs on water conservation for hotel associates and guests create a further build-up towards sustainability. In-room messaging for options to choose for getting linen changed on alternate days ensures guests remain aware of their contribution towards reducing energy and water waste. Amenity cards are placed in bathrooms near faucets and showers with reminders to turn off the tap when not in use and reuse towels to reduce laundry loads.

Chalet Hotels also integrates green building design, encompassing sustainable landscaping strategies like the use of native and drought-resistant species to minimize water use and implementing efficient irrigation systems. By adopting some of these best practices and by cutting-edge technology, the Group has managed to reduce water use significantly. **HAI**





# MOVING THE POWER NEEDLE

**INGE HUIJBRECHTS**, Global SVP Sustainability, Security & Corporate Communications, Radisson Hotel Group, says they are committed to being Net Zero by 2050, and have taken steps towards the goal, focussing on some key energy initiatives.

In the past, the hospitality industry's focus revolved around impeccable services and warm hospitality, with minor attention given to the consequences of the operations. After the pandemic, the shift towards sustainable practices and responsible travel has become an absolute necessity to ensure long-term sustainable and equitable growth.

Many travellers have started to prioritize experiences that not only provide luxury and comfort but also align with their desire to reduce the carbon footprint. In the B2B sector too, companies prefer partnerships with organizations that demonstrate sustainability initiatives. With eco-consciousness striking the human chord, the propensity to spend on sustainable travel has also increased. As per the Booking.com Sustainable Travel Report 2023, 80% of people find it important to travel more sustainably to feel reassured that they are driving impact. This change in consumption patterns has been a noteworthy catalyst for the hospitality industry, encouraging major players to relook at the way they involve their clients in sustainability.

The Radisson Hotel Group is committed to being Net Zero by 2050, has validated its



Science-Based Targets, and has taken active steps towards this goal. The sustainability strategy revolves around increasing the energy efficiency of hotel buildings and transitioning to renewable energy. Over the past decade, it has led to an impressive 30% reduction in average energy and water consumption across its properties.

The Radisson Hotel Group is pursuing three key strategies to attain its Net Zero objectives.

These strategies include eco-friendly building practices with leading certifications such as LEED, BREEAM, and EDGE; a complete shift to



Radisson Hotel Group signs Glasgow Declaration

100% renewable energy sources; and a transition to electrification.

One of our hotels in Western India, Radisson Blu Nashik, has signed a contract for Renewable Energy, called the "Group Captive Model". This benefits hotel owners who co-invest in a remote solar PV plant, which sells renewable energy at a cheaper rate compared to utility pricing. In doing so, the Radisson Group, together with the owners of the Radisson Blu Nashik, have moved the needle by introducing the Renewable Energy purchasing model to the hotel industry. The Radisson Blu Hotel in Bengaluru operates entirely on renewable electricity and is self-sufficient in all its electricity requirements.

Radisson Blu Ahmedabad, Radisson Blu Plaza Mysore, Radisson Blu Pune Kharadi, Radisson Salem, Radisson Blu Resort Temple Bay Mamallapuram, Radisson Blu Chennai City Centre, Radisson Blu Nagur and Radisson Blu Alibaug are also leading the decarbonization race by entering into green energy open access contracts.

These best practice are part of the comprehensive plan for transitioning to renewable energy, designed in collaboration with Accenture and spanning 25 markets, enabling the Group to meet its 2030 carbon reduction targets.

**As per a recent Booking.com Sustainable Travel Report 2023, 80% of people find it important to travel more sustainably, to feel reassured that they are driving impact. This change in consumption patterns has been a noteworthy catalyst for the hospitality industry**

The Group is further actively participating in initiatives like the Hotel Sustainability Basics and the Pathway to Net Positive Hospitality, collaborating with prominent associations such as the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (SHA).

The Hotel Sustainability Basics initiative has been awarded and recognized as the global trusted industry standard for hotel sustainability. It is supported by over 70 companies and destinations, from Phuket to the Caribbean, and endorsed, amongst others, by HAI, IHCL, Accor, and the Radisson Hotel Group.

Consumer awareness about the environment is at its peak, with guests realizing the importance of fighting climate change, preserving the planet, and making sustainable travel choices. Catering to the sustainability expectations of eco-conscious travellers has become imperative for the industry to stay relevant, ultimately boosting revenue and long-term success. **HAI**



# PRESERVING HISTORIES, PEOPLE & PLANET

Sustainability, for Neemrana Hotels, is not just about eliminating waste; it's about turning waste into a resource, says **SONAVI KAICKER**, Chief Executive Officer, Neemrana Hotels.

**N**eemrana Hotels, a leading name in Heritage hospitality, has for decades taken on the noble mission of resurrecting the ruins of yesteryears into 'non-hotel' hotels. These 'non-hotel' hotels invite travellers to step back in time, offering them a unique opportunity to experience past glories. But the vision extends beyond nostalgia. At the heart of Neemrana lies a profound philosophy, a commitment to give back to India and its people through culture, heritage, and sustainability.

With 18 heritage hotels over 13 locations in the country, Neemrana Hotels blend preservation, restoration, and sustainability. Our commitment to the preservation of the bygone era is exemplified in various ways, but nowhere is it more evident than in our adoption of sustainable practices.

One of the most prominent sustainability initiatives undertaken by Neemrana Hotels is the stance against plastics. In a world drowning in plastic waste, Neemrana Hotels has chosen the responsible path of using glass bottles instead



of plastic for water supply across all properties. In addition, by recycling glass bottles at the 19th-century Tijara Fort-Palace in Alwar, by sterilizing and refilling them, we have taken a significant step towards reducing the plastic footprint.

At the flagship 15th-century Neemrana Fort-Palace near Delhi, we have an organic



Neemrana Fort-Palace, Heritage Resort near Jaipur

**By recycling glass bottles at the 19th-century Tijara Fort-Palace, Alwar, by sterilizing and refilling them, we have taken a significant step towards reducing the plastic footprint**

waste compost machine that converts food leftovers into manure. This nutrient-rich compost is used in our nearby farms, where vegetables and fruits are grown. The circular economy we have thus created minimizes waste and preserves resources.

In a world dazzled by extravagant chandeliers consuming vast amounts of energy, Neemrana Hotels goes beyond fake luxury. We have LED lighting across all the hotels.

With a growing concern for global warming and air quality, Neemrana Hotels is gradually increasing the availability of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations across all properties. We have already introduced EV charging stations at the 15th century Neemrana Fort-Palace, the 19th

century Tijara Fort-Palace and the 20th century Neemrana's Three Waters.

In an effort to minimize the use of fossil fuels and support local communities, we procure vegetables, ingredients, and other supplies from nearby regions. This practice reduces the carbon footprint associated with transportation and bolsters local economies.

The essence of our mission extends beyond the past. It embraces the present and the future, with sustainability as the guiding principle. Our journey has been a testament to the fact that preserving history and culture goes hand in hand with preserving the environment and contributing to local communities. For the last three decades, Neemrana has been organising weekly cultural performances at the properties, to celebrate the artistry of local talent. These events reflect our commitment to heritage, nurturing creativity, and supporting communities. Thus, Neemrana 'non-hotel' hotels are not just a trip back in time, but a journey into a greener, more sustainable future. **HAI**



# VOCAL FOR LOCAL

Over three-and-a-half decades, CGH Earth Hotel Group has seamlessly woven the tapestry of local traditions, sustainability, and community empowerment, creating unique hospitality experiences for guests.

**MICHAEL DOMINIC**, MD & CEO, CGH Earth, tells us how they are moving towards sustainable luxury and cultural preservation by involving local communities and traditions.



**T**he CGH Earth Hotel Group comprises 17 boutique hotels and four holistic, premier healthcare facilities, located in south India. From the start, the Group dived in with a “less is more” mantra, respect for the environment and local communities, and adoption of the local ethos.

In tribal villages in Kumily, Kerala, elephant grass thatching was the norm in the old days. Today, concrete structures have replaced the old cottages. This old-world thatching style was revived at Spice Village and is now a major economic contributor to the local Mannan tribe. Elephant grass—named so, because an elephant can hide in its tall thickets—is typical to this region. Traditionally, the Mannan tribals would cut the dry, stiff grass for their thatching needs and this also minimized the probability of forest fires. The thatching is several layers thick. Every couple of years, the top layer is refurbished with new grass brought from

**In the tribal villages in Kumily, elephant grass thatching was the norm. Today, concrete structures have replaced the old cottages. This old-world style thatching was revived at Spice Village and is now a major economic contributor to the local Mannan tribe**

the forest. It is done with a tribal collective under local administrative approval. This traditional method of thatching is now only found in Spice Village. The operation is a source of revenue for the two local thatching communities. For the forest department, the controlled use of elephant grass creates a supportive defence, which helps them curtail forest fires.

Most of our food sourcing is through local farmers, small homestead farm owners, and local fishermen. CGH Earth Resorts has organic farms which are looked after by local farmers. We collaborate with the villagers who supply many of the items we

use in the resort, like paper bags, waste bin lines, food items like pappadam, candles for the rooms, and so on. Nearly 90% of our workforce is drawn locally. This is how community involvement is intrinsically woven in the CGH Group.

Various local artists, artisans, craftsmen, weavers, chefs, farmers and local businesses work with us, extending their knowledge and skills to showcase authentic experiences and give a feel of local customs to guests. This involvement ranges from local ladies making colourful geometric kolam designs every morning on the grounds of the properties in Tamil Nadu to local chefs dishing out the famous Chettinad cuisine at Visalam, murals by local artists on the walls of Kalari Kovilakom, traditional family and community recipes shared by households at Fort Kochi, and so on. Our extensive and happy relations with local communities make us more of a family than a company. Our guests become part of this large, loose-knit but happy group. **HAI**



# BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP

Gender equity is pivotal in our journey towards a peaceful, progressive and sustainable world. **GAURAV POKHARIYAL**, Executive Vice President, Human Resources, IHCL, mentions the programs at IHCL geared towards inclusivity, to involve more women and people with disabilities into the workforce.



**T**he Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) has launched many initiatives to bring in diversity into the workforce. Some of the highlight programs are the DIWA (Dynamic Intelligent Women in Action), through which efforts are made to induct women talent across frontline roles. This is a structured 12-month program, focused towards building functional skills and provides women an opportunity to build their professional careers.

Another program, 'Second That' provides opportunities to talented women to restart their professional journeys after a career break. The initiative is open to women who are looking to jumpstart their careers after taking a break due to family, health, education, or any other reason.

IHCL has sensitization programs for colleagues across hotels in the managerial cadre. These programs have been implemented through theatre workshops that foster realization and awareness of the existing biases and tell us how we

**'Second that' is a career transition program by IHCL to provide opportunities to talented women, to restart their professional journeys after a career break**

can work towards eliminating the same. In select locations, IHCL has introduced specific trainings to create a welcoming workplace for people with special abilities.

From a development perspective, we have a three-tier program for high potential women across all levels in the organization. Select women employees at Junior management are provided learning & mentoring opportunities through leaders in IHCL and TATA Group resources. Women employees can make use of the 'Women Leadership Program' that helps to prepare them for leadership roles. This program provides insights towards enhancing self-awareness, crafting a compelling personal brand, navigating complex power dynamics, leveraging networks and building effective relationships at work. **HAI**



# RAINBOW WORLD: THE HEARTBEAT OF SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY

**VIVEK SHUKLA**, CEO, Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, says Inclusivity for them is not just a business strategy; it's a commitment towards creating a more sustainable world for all.



**A** fundamental principle in the hospitality industry today is Inclusion, that embodies the core values of diversity, equity, and respect.

It is about creating an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, or physical abilities, feel valued, respected, and have a sense of belonging.

We have always believed that a diverse team brings diverse solutions. By ensuring that our hiring practices are unbiased and that we provide equal opportunities for growth, we've been able to create a work environment that fosters creativity



and innovation. This not only benefits our brand but elevates the entire guest experience. We have hired resources from across the spectrum, be it neuro-diverse communities, LGBTQIA+ community or people with disabilities, including acid attack warriors. With over 1,000 people from marginalised communities at various intersections working with us, we are ensuring we build more empathetic organisations with an inclusive leadership approach.

Similarly, our dedication to inclusion extends to our guests. Today's travellers are more diverse than ever, with varied needs and expectations. By adopting an inclusive approach, we ensure that our services cater to all, be it in terms of accessibility for differently-abled guests,

**We have hired resources from across the spectrum, be it neuro-diverse communities, LGBTQIA+ community or people with disabilities, including acid attack warriors**

or culturally sensitive amenities and cuisines.

Inclusive practices enhance employee engagement, promote community integration, and tap into a wider range of talents and ideas. As we navigate the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, it's clear that inclusion will remain at the heart of sustainable hospitality. For brands like The Lalit, it's not just a business strategy; it's a commitment towards creating a more sustainable world for all. **HAI**



# DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL

**ARADHANA LAL**, Senior Vice President, Sustainability & ESG, Lemon Tree Hotels, writes on the Group's inclusive policies and workshops, involving people with special abilities.



A crucial pillar of the Lemon Tree business model is the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion program. Lemon Tree believes that the brand should stand for more than "just profit" and we are therefore driving the brand to become "truly Indian and Trusted". We have focused our efforts on creating a socially inclusive work environment which seeks to bring in people from different backgrounds, abilities and ethnicities at the workplace.

People with disabilities (may be physical, social or economic disabilities leading to an opportunity deprivation) must be provided the same opportunities as others to realize their full potential and live with dignity. By creating a supportive environment in the organization that allows them to deliver their best, we are able to play a part, however small, in social inclusiveness, opportunity/livelihood creation, and therefore, nation-building.

Lemon Tree has defined the goal as mainstreaming "Opportunity Deprived Indians" i.e. ODIs into the workforce. ODIs include:

**Employees with Disability (EwD) come under these groups:**

## PHYSICAL DISABILITY

- Speech and Hearing Impaired (SHI)
- Orthopedically Handicapped (OH)
- Acid Survivors
- Low Vision (LV), going forward we will also attempt Visually Impaired (VI)



## INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

- Down Syndrome
- Autism

**Employees from economically/socially marginalized segments (EcoSoc) like orphans, widows/divorcees, transgender, school drop outs, and so on.**

Our Training and Sensitization program requires sensitization and awareness building of the entire team and brings its own share of challenges. We have successfully conducted sensitivity training for all employees on board, including new hires, every month. This initiative has been led, among others, by external experts whose forte is Indian Sign Language (ISL) and who have worked closely with speech-and-hearing impaired.

This sort of commitment requires substantial investments in training and refresher modules to keep their skill and knowledge levels up to standards, so as to leave no one behind. The training formats need to be customized to their needs and the course material cum delivery systems need to be in tune with the specific requirements of such employees.

**This sort of commitment requires substantial investments in training and refresher modules to keep the skill and knowledge levels up to standards, so as to leave no one behind**

An example of specialized training material/delivery system is the creation and implementation of a visual aids (video/film). For all processes in Housekeeping and Food & Beverage Service, training modules that were written for employees have been enhanced with the use of ISL in videos. This has helped increase the understanding of tasks greatly.

Another compelling aspect of our inclusion initiative has been the work done over the last ten years with Intellectual and Developmental Disability including Down Syndrome and Slow Learners, at the coffee shops, and with Autistic people in Housekeeping. This has been done across Delhi/NCR and in Mumbai and Bengaluru. We partner with an NGO in this space and their coach/special educator supports such workshops on our premises. This is how the Lemon Tree is an Inclusive family, geared towards development for all. **HAI**



# Making Our Hotels More Sustainable

CONSOCIA ADVISORY, leading image and professional management consultancy, in a well-researched industry study, takes a close look at how Hotels can devise an ESG score card, to align best business practices relevant for a climate positive world today.

**T**he hospitality industry in India is rapidly growing, with the country's tourism industry projected to become one of the world's largest by 2029. Hotels are an important sector of the hospitality and tourism business, and are significant contributors to the economy. In 2021, the tourism industry contributed 6% to the Indian GDP, with hospitality contributing to almost 16% to the employment in the country. There is a pressing opportunity for hotels and resorts to embrace sustainability in their business operations, as they have the potential to make a significant positive impact by minimizing waste and emissions. The industry operates on exceptionally small margins, and econo-

mizing is important. Economy of resources is thus necessary and can be accomplished with sustainable business practices. The industry is increasingly adopting sustainable practices from an **environmentally responsible, socially inclusive, and robust corporate governance perspective.**

A number of regulations currently oversee the Indian hospitality business, like the National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry (NIDHI), and the System for Assessment, Awareness and Training for Hospitality Industry (SAATHI) guidelines. The transformation of Indian hotels to a more sustainable business model is integrated into these guidelines, but there is no guideline as yet which dictates or certifies the ESG metrics of a hotel holistically. For Indian businesses, the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) protocol, introduced by the SEBI for listed companies, sets the way towards comprehensive ESG-centric transformation of business practices. On a global scale, this is done by both country-specific protocols (EU ESG etc.) as well as third-party assessors which use rating methodologies to gauge the ESG compliance of businesses (Moody's ESG, S&P, Fitch, and so on).

Some Indian and global hotels chains have already begun to implement measures for sustainable hotel business practices. Some metrics include the World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) Hotel Sustainability Basics disclosure and compliance mechanism, and the Earthcheck certification. However, it is noteworthy that there exists no Indian industry-driven and unifying initiative to make hospitality business practices sustainable – all such compliances are currently voluntary and add limited value to the business. With the global shift to adopting sustainable business practices, it is crucial for Indian hotels to also adopt the same.

## How hotels gain from ESG compliance

ESG-driven sustainable business practices offer several key advantages to hotels. These practices play a pivotal role in reducing envi-

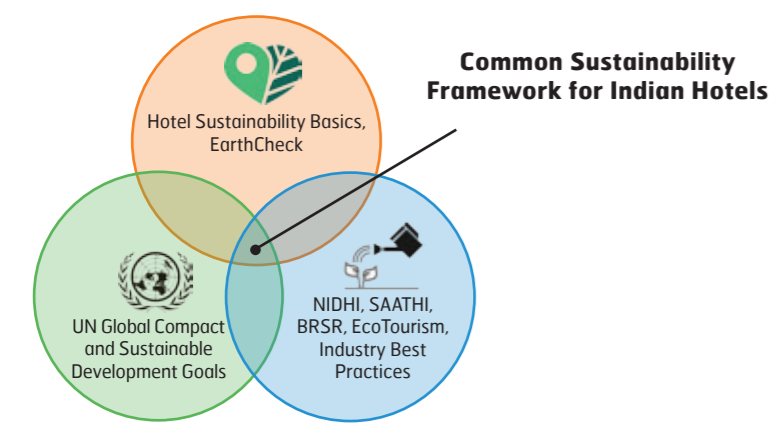
**There exists no Indian industry-driven and unifying initiative to make hospitality business practices sustainable. All such compliances are currently voluntary and add limited value to the business. With the global shift to adopting sustainable business practices, it is crucial for Indian hotels to also adopt the same**

ronmental impact, boosting social value, and enhancing corporate governance – all of which contribute to a holistic, net-positive effect on the environment and the community, while also fostering a happier workforce.

First, these initiatives enhance hotels' competitiveness and profitability. ESG compliance is inherently designed to promote operational efficiency, mitigate risks, and bolster the ability to attract and retain employees. This translates into substantial cost savings, as ESG compliance typically involves adopting sustainable practices that curtail energy and water consumption, waste generation, and other operational expenses, consequently leading to improved profitability and EBITDA. It is also beneficial from an investor perspective, as investors increasingly factor in ESG performance when making investment decisions. Aligning with ESG standards enables hotels to diversify their investor base, access greater capital, and elevate long-term financial performance.

Second, in light of the tightening government regulations on sustainability, a voluntary and steadfast commitment to responsible business practices ensures hotels are well-prepared to meet regulatory compliances, maintain their operating licenses, minimize legal risks and thus avoid fines and penalties.

Lastly, embracing ESG-driven business practices lends significant marketing and advertising strength to hotels. These practices cater to the discerning consumer who places a high premium on sustainability when choosing their accommodation. Proactive ESG compliance positions hotels as responsible and accountable corporate citizens, fostering better relationships with regulators and stakeholders.



Moving to a viable system for Indian hotels

There is a wealth of global literature guiding pathways to sustainable transformation of businesses. However, we recognize the need for an indigenous system in transforming Indian hotels to become more sustainable, one that recognizes and integrates unique Indian conditions.

Consocia Advisory proposes a three-pronged pathway to develop this indigenous system, focusing on the aspects of common alignment between hotels, a prescriptive framework to guide the transformation, and

building the necessary capacity to accomplish the transformation efficiently.

**First**, an initiative to accomplish this is to align the interests of hotels across India to develop a **Common Sustainability Charter for Indian Hotels**, which paves the path towards ESG. The charter will establish understanding amongst all leading Indian hotels, agreeing to recalibrate business practices in the hospitality sector to comply with contemporary ESG standards.

**Second**, the development of a comprehensive, hospitality-specific ESG scorecard, one which acts as both an assessment mechanism and a prescriptive transformation manual for hotels. The scorecard will be based roughly on the existing scorecards used by globally-recognized credit-ratings agencies, such as Moody’s Investor Services, Fitch, and S&P Global Ratings.

The final step in the process towards sustainable hospitality is to leverage appropriate on-ground core competencies of experts to conduct capacity-building exercises to equip hotels with the wherewithal for sustainable business practice. **HAI**

The framework and this charter will also be aligned to the nationally accepted frameworks on ESG and the BRSR

Table 1 portrays how effectively various aspects of the Common Sustainability Charter are aligned with parameters like global, local, and industry-specific for ESG compliance.

Common Sustainability Charter	HSB	NIDHI	SAATHI	SDGS	BRSR	EarthCheck	EcoTourism (MoEFCC)
1.Environmental							
1.1. Environmental Capital							
1.2. Natural Capital							
1.3. Technological Capital							
1.4. Circularity							
2. Social							
2.1. Human Capital							
2.2. Social Capital							
2.3. Stakeholder Engagement							
2.4. Communications							
3. Governance							
3.1. Equity, Ethics & Governance							
3.2. Legal Compliance							
3.3. Sustainable procurement and consumption							
3.4. Risk Management							
3.5. Cybersecurity/ Data privacy							

Full alignment Partial alignment



Mr. Zubin Saxena, Managing Director & Area Senior Vice President - South Asia

- 18% reduction of carbon emissions per square meter vs 2019
- 100% of meetings at RHG are carbon neutral, offsetting 61,800 tons of carbon since 2019
- World’s first hotel group to make meetings and events carbon negative across 400+ hotels
- €1.1M donated in cash and in-kind by corporate offices and hotels to nonprofit organizations
- 29,000 people provided with safe drinking water for life through our towel re-use program

GREEN OPERATIONS

Sustainable hospitality in Himachal Pradesh

Located in Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, Rakkh Resort, a member of Radisson Individuals Retreats is set against the pristine backdrop of the Dhauladhar ranges. The ethos of the resort is built on sustainability and community engagement. The luxury resort is designed to maximize sunlight in interior spaces. Locally sourced structural materials and copper and earthen utensils have been included in the design.

Additionally, drinking water is sourced from the natural water spring inside the resort and electricity is sourced from hydro power. The responsible architecture ensures a reduction in energy consumption which is in tune with the resort’s sustainability-based values. With a team that is 100% locally employed, sourcing seasonal produce from a local organic garden and with a culinary cosmos, the resort’s Food and Beverage philosophy promotes regional flavors with a strong emphasis on local Himachal food on its menus.

EV PARTNERSHIPS

As a green mobility leader, RHG has setup several EV-mobility partnerships with the aim of bringing EV charging solutions to all Indian and European RHG properties. In partnership with Sunfuel in India and PowerGo in Europe, we aim to build a regular, fast, and ultra-fast charging infrastructure with numerous advantages for guests, clients, owners, and partners.

RESPONSIBLE SOURCING

RHG undertakes the responsible management of its value chain as a sustainability priority, starting with its own team all the way through to its suppliers and guests. RHG has been rated by EcoVadis as a sustainable supplier with a score performance at the silver medal recognition level since 2017, putting the company in the top 8% of the accommodation industry and top 25% of performers worldwide.

We are working to increase transparency, advance sustainable procurement, support risk identification and mitigation, and measure and reduce CO2e emissions of key suppliers. Our suppliers constitute a key stakeholder for the company and an integral part of its pathway to a net-zero carbon future by 2050. Our sourcing strategy supports our efforts to integrate and promote responsible practices and apply sustainability criteria in all areas of the supply chain processes:

- Green Energy sourcing
- Net-zero focused sourcing initiatives
- Local sourcing initiatives
- Eliminating single-use plastics
- Transition to cage-free eggs
- Partnership with EcoVadis for CSR visibility in supply chain



# MAINSTREAMING SUSTAINABILITY IN MANAGEMENT

## NIRANJAN KHATRI

Is a seasoned Hotelier, ex-general manager, environment initiatives, ITC Hotels, and a leading voice in sustainability initiatives in the hotel sector. Way back in the 1990s, he pioneered path-breaking conservation plans at Welcomgroup Bay Island in Port Blair. A peek into how he cobbled a sustainable work plan at the Hotel in the 1990s, saving it from near-disaster, and focussing on demand-side management. All his learnings are even more relevant today when ESG and resource-scarcity are hot topics.



**T**here are very few places in the world that can be conferred with bragging rights. Andaman & Nicobar Islands has this unique privilege. The islands are a visual delight for ornithologists, entomologists, volcanologists, biologists, and of course, for tourists who come to enjoy the breath-taking beauty of the densely tropical forests, pristine beaches and corals, flitting with myriad varieties of fish, the spawning grounds for the marine ecosystem.

The islands used to be called Kala Pani, black waters, from the perspective of freedom fighters imprisoned during the British rule. In the 1980s and the 1990s, people dreaded being transferred there because of the remoteness and the hobbled infrastructure. There were only two flights per week from the

mainland and the ships used to come once in 30 days. I used to call it the archipelago or “Neela Pani”, the blue waters, as this was the reality.

I was very fortunate to be educated by a local businessman, the late Samir Acharya, about the nuances of the corals and its importance as the nursery for small fish and the foundation of the marine ecosystem, which were being assaulted by the tourists. Similarly, the local anthropologists educated me about the conservation practices of the tribals living there. The tribes have a practice: if they have fished in a particular beach for x number of days, they move to another beach on the island, so that the fish have time to regenerate. The unsustainable fishing practices which are extractive in nature by large fishing vessels are creating “deserts” in the seas due to overfishing.

The remote islands, however, faced shortages of energy and water, and the burden of waste. We converted the challenges into opportunities. The pristine nature of the islands was guiding me with its invisible hands to navigate a subject I was not trained by anyone. As a matter of fact, the subject of sustainability and resource management was very nebulous then. Today, with the vast amount of data sloshing in public domain, stakeholders have not internalized the risk element and the warnings given by scientists on the adverse impact of climate change, if we do not use resources modestly.

Intuitively, I learnt that we are living in a finite world and therefore we must adopt resource optimization practices. The hotel industry has a great opportunity to radiate such practices to diverse industries by virtue of people coming from different business sectors to stay in the hotel, who notice differentiated and ecologically sensitive service design.

### Working beyond compliance

In the islands we tied up with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) to start a small compensatory/ depository afforestation program in the airport, to nudge all stakeholders to green

**The tribes have a practice: if they have fished in a particular beach for x number of days, they move to another beach on the island, so that the fish have time to regenerate**

India. We did not know then (no internet in those days) that India has only 28 trees per person, as opposed to 146 trees per person in China and 9,300 trees per person in Canada.

The green cover needs to be enhanced for multiple reasons, like mitigating the impact of climate change, retarding soil erosion, and harvesting rainwater naturally into our depleted aquifer, which took millions of years to permeate into deep aquifers. Thanks to diesel pumps, water is drawn from great depths with great abandon in the farming sector, as in the industry and in cities, leading to a red zone in agriculture belts.

Coming back to our story, we faced a severe water crisis. Our water supply was reduced from 10 kl per day to 2 kl per day from 1 April 1990, to run a 45-room hotel. We received the notification on 31 March. I was shell-shocked and saw stars on a bright sunny day!

When you get into a fearful situation your mind either freezes and does nothing, or the fear propels you to improvise, with creative outcomes. We implemented rainwater harvesting and installed dual piping, fresh water pipes for drinking and bathing, and second pipe lined for providing sea water for flushing. In short, we focused on demand-side water management as opposed to supply-side.

We blended our business with social issues in a very humble way, commensurate with our earnings. We helped to upgrade a dilapidated orphanage by sending our skilled carpenters, electricians and plumbers. We trained four boys in the food & beverage service department and they got jobs in the local hotels after they exited from the orphanage.

We started a nano clean India initiative in 1989, by cleaning our act and repurposing all residual waste into something useful: our used cooking oil was converted into soap for washing utensils. We started a pilot program with Indian Railways to use our stale oil to make biodiesel to operate their shunters. We engaged with Indian Airlines to give unconsumed buns and butter chiplets to the local orphanage twice a week. We did not know about the tools of eco-design, and just organically, got into regenerative and circular economy and followed the operating principles of nature-based economy.

### From today to tomorrow

Environmental stewardship must be embedded in the DNA of industries. Just as we do annual health check-ups to assess our health risks, the same needs to be done by the industries and their supply chains. The environment stewardship practices must not be green tinted, but proactive, overt in the public domain, and far-sighted. Without having such clarity of thinking in 1991, we followed these concepts by making an ecological museum in the hotel depicting the challenges and opportunities in the environment domain. Public education hoardings were put at the Port Blair airport regarding carbon sequestration (compensatory/depository afforestation), and at the jetties regarding visitor etiquettes while visiting the fragile breath-taking islands, and so on.

Climate calamity is already brutally hitting agriculture and we can see this in the increasing prices of food items, and even the farmers are impacted by this. One of the most critical supply chain partners of the hospitality sector are farmers. The industry needs to develop a deeper

**The pristine nature of the islands was guiding me with its invisible hands to navigate a subject I was not trained by anyone. As a matter of fact, the subject of sustainability and resource management was very nebulous then**



**We did not know then (no internet in those days) that India has only 28 trees per person, as opposed to 146 trees per person in China and 9,300 trees per person in Canada**

relationship with them so that they are given responsible inputs to raise their earning capacities and make them resilient in the onslaught of climate emergency.

### Understanding carbon budget

According to a recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world is allowed to emit 2900 gigatonnes (Gt) of CO<sub>2</sub> from the pre-industrial age till the end of the 21st century. Till 2011, the world had already emitted 1900 Gt, and approximately 1000 Gt remains to be used till 2100 to stay under 2 degrees Celsius.

### Proactive strategies & opportunities

The hotel industry may voluntarily implement the following suggestions in their own self-enlightened interest to remain relevant in the face of rapidly changing laws nationally and internationally. Industry bodies can collaborate with the government to set up sustainability centres to engage and develop green managers and workers:

- **Agriculture:** Procure from farmers vegetables with less chemicals and high nutrition, and



**One of the most critical supply chain partners of the hospitality sector are farmers. The industry needs to develop a deeper relationship with them so that they are given responsible inputs to raise their earning capacities and make them resilient in the onslaught of climate emergency**

ensure a higher gross value of farm output. India's vegetable cultivation (FY22) was 204.6 MT (44% of potatoes/other tubers & onions) spread over 11.28 million hectares. The median farm yield @ 18 tons/ha is quite low, as India's agro-climatic conditions are suitable for achieving a higher annual yield. (China's vegetable production was 721 million tons over 20.86 million hectares. In FY22, India's export of vegetables was \$0.77 billion (in comparison, China's vegetables exports were \$12.4 billion in 2022). India has the potential to be a global leader in the production, consumption, and export of nutritious vegetables.

- **Water management:** Help marginalized farmers to become water resilient by making ponds in their land, costing about Rs 20,000 per pond. I have partnered with an NGO and have sponsored three such ponds (a nano initiative) in Tumkur district, a water-stressed region. Once the success of the ponds was seen, 38 more farmers implemented the same in their respective farmlands.
- **Bank of Nutrition (BoN):** The hotel industry,

through its supply chain, can encourage the setting up of BoNs in villages to address the malnutrition challenge by growing superfoods like moringa, papaya, guava, lime, and banana behind every home. This initiative has been rolled out with the help of schoolchildren in 225 villages in the last two years. In the bargain, the children are getting experiential learning.

- **Green energy loans for staff:** Decarbonisation of the power sector is a key strategy for India's Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) as well as Net Zero pathways. India plans to increase its installed capacity of renewable energy to 450 GW by 2030, out of which the cumulative installed capacity of distributed energy will be 80 GW. Tourism and hospitality organizations may consider giving loans at subsidized levels or interest-free, for staff.
- **Waste management:** The landfill sites occupy 1,546 sq km of land, and this is likely to increase to over 3,000 sq km by 2030 if we take a "business-as-usual" approach, as per the Central Pollution Control Board. The landfill sites are a manifestation of our collective inefficiency. Approximately 50% of the waste generated in hotels constitutes food waste: this can be upcycled to produce biogas which can run kitchens in hotels, and thus we can avoid producing methane dumped in landfills.

Similarly, during the construction of hotels, 40-60 kgs of construction debris is generated, as per the Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC). This debris can be repurposed to make tiles or bricks for non-load-bearing walls and may be converted to sand. Such measures will help to clean up our cities, aligned with the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

To conclude, I would like to quote Thomas Edison: "Until man duplicates a blade of grass, nature can laugh at his so-called scientific knowledge." **HAI**

(Link for further reading: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/food/world-food-day-2023-water-crisis-threatens-58-trillion-in-economic-value-food-security-says-wwf-report-92326>)

# MILLET TEMPTATIONS



Director Food Production, Chef **ASHUTOSH NERLEKAR**, joined THE Park Chennai in November 2015 and is at the helm of the Kitchens of THE Park Chennai. He has executed and pioneered several revolutionary food concepts that showcase his culinary mastery—from a Hemp themed food festival to a Fire fly themed glow-in-the-dark dining experience to a menu curated to highlight the food philosophy of the Blue Zone or of the centenarians of the world. In line with THE Park's brand promise of 'Anything But Ordinary', for this Issue he gives us some superfood millets recipes.



## Millet biscotti

Ingredients	Qty.
Free range eggs	5
Sugar	208 gms
Foxtail millet flour	291 gms
Almond powder	100 gms
Baking powder	8 gms
Pistachio-Chopped	83 gms

## Procedure

- Beat egg and sugar till light and fluffy
- Add the dry ingredients and freeze the mixture for an hour to hold firm
- Pour the mixture in a mould and bake at 180 c for 15-17 minutes
- Allow to cool
- Slice into strips of your liking. Place on a parchment paper and dry until crisp.

## Foxtail millet lavash

Ingredients	Qty.
Flour	150 gms
Millet flour(Blend of foxtail)	100 gms
Salt	5 gms
Sugar	16 gms
Salted butter	75 gms
Water	100 ml

## Procedure

- Prepare a dough following the straight dough method of mixing all ingredients together
- Add water and prepare a soft dough. Allow to rest
- Roll the dough to a thickness of 1.5mm. Sprinkle herbs of your choice and parmesan cheese
- Cut into discs using a cookie cutter and bake at 180c for 5 minutes
- Allow to cool and serve. **HAI**



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# *A Cultural Kaleidoscope*

# WEST BENGAL

For this issue, we travel through the diverse landscapes of West Bengal to explore its many tourist offerings.

BY RIAAN JACOB GEORGE



St Paul's A cathedral

T

he mention of West Bengal conjures up a multitude of images. From the iconic spots and architecture-dotted streets of Kolkata to the peaceful setting of Shantiniketan, the idyllic tea gardens of Darjeeling, and the tiger spotting in Sundarbans, West Bengal is power packed with options for

any tourist. Not only is it popular among heritage and architecture buffs, it's also known for spiritual tourism, wildlife, and adventure tourism. According to data released by the Union Ministry, West Bengal stood at the third spot in the number of international tourist arrivals, after Gujarat and Maharashtra in 2022. In terms of domestic tourism, it was on the eighth spot. In this issue, we highlight some attractions of the state.

**Architecture buffs will find much to appreciate by walking through the older parts of Chandannagore and Serampore witnessing the rather unexpected French and Danish influences that dot this space**



Victoria Memorial, Kolkata



Morgan House, Kalimpong



Second Hooghly Bridge



Metropolitan Building, Esplanade Kolkata

## Architecture

West Bengal's capital Kolkata is home to some of the finest architecture in the country. Given the state's multiple cultural influences and colonial past, you will find all sorts of influences throughout the city. It is prudent to research on local guides who specialise in heritage walks through the city, who will take you through some old neighbourhoods of Kolkata to show you some of the massive havelis. Many of them lie abandoned, but their splendour and architectural grandeur are still visible today. The Haveli tour of Kolkata is a must-do. The British left behind many stately buildings in the city from Victoria Memorial and Writers' Building to St. John's Church and more. Few people know that outside Kolkata, a town called Chandannagore was once a French bastion. The heart of the city still has French influences, a French-style waterfront promenade and a cathedral. Serampore is another picturesque town, which was once famous for its Danish colonial occupants. Architecture buffs will find much to appreciate by walking through the older parts of Chandannagore and Serampore witnessing the rather unexpected French and Danish influences that dot this space. The town of Cooch Behar is also a gem for heritage enthusiasts with its beautiful neighbourhoods and the grandiose Cooch Behar Raj Palace.



Kolkata Zoo, Alipore Zoo



Jaldapara and Gorumara national parks



Shantiniketan

### Wildlife Tourism

According to the West Bengal Government website, the state boasts 4,692 sq km of forest land under the protected area tag. Given the unique geographical location of West Bengal, it comes as no surprise that the state has many options for wildlife enthusiasts. The Sundarbans National Park is known as the home of the Royal Bengal tiger. This expansive mangrove forest straddles India and Bangladesh and promises some stellar sightings of the Royal Bengal tiger. In the foothills of the Himalayas, Gorumara National Park is a relatively undiscovered spot, known for its gorgeous mountainous landscapes and population of rhinoceros. Another place to spot tigers is the Buxa Tiger Reserve, which commences at the Gangetic Plains and shares a northern border with the Himalayas. The chances of spotting a tiger in the rugged terrain of Buxa are always very high. In addition, areas around Darjeeling are brimming with adventure trails, flora and fauna, which are extremely popular among tourists. Elephant enthusiasts can see them in the wild at the Mayurjharna Elephant Reserve.

**From the unique food, dress and traditions of the Bengali Hindus, to the Buddhists of the hills, the Chinese influences, the Anglo-Indians and the Muslim communities, each of these communities have brought something different to the state, making it an altogether interesting experience for tourists**



Durga Puja pandal, at Kolkata, West Bengal

**The experience is most immersive when one wanders through the illuminated streets of Kolkata, visiting the Pujo pandals, sampling the local food and partaking in the rituals that are so different from the rest of India**

### Festivals

When it comes to festivities in West Bengal, the first thing that comes to mind is Durga Puja, or Pujo, as it is known locally. The experience is most immersive when one wanders through the illuminated streets of Kolkata, visiting the Pujo pandals, sampling the local food and partaking in the rituals that are so different from the rest of India. However, Christmas is also celebrated with great gusto in Kolkata, with multiple neighbourhoods decked for the festive season. Given Kolkata's Chinese community, there are also major celebrations in certain parts of the city for the Chinese New Year. There are also other festivals celebrated across the state such as the Bengali New Year, Kali Puja and Rabindra Jayanti, which unites people of all backgrounds.



Festivals in Darjeeling



Gajan festival at the village Narna of Howrah



Darjeeling Tea Estate



Himalayan Mountaineering Institute



Nature Knights: White Water Rafting

### Tea Tourism

Darjeeling is the hub of tea tourism in West Bengal. It is, in many ways, a first port of entry towards discovering the northeastern states. The quaint toy train that runs through Darjeeling is extremely popular among tourists. In addition to that, this region, which produces the highly prized Darjeeling tea boasts many tea factories that one may visit, in addition to the boutique villas.

Darjeeling also houses the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, where people can come and learn mountaineering and adventure sports, across different levels. There are also options for adventure sports around the region such as paragliding, which offers spectacular views of the snow-capped Himalayas in the distance. The region is filled with little rivers and streams, which means that white water rafting is extremely popular. There are also many local companies that organise treks and mountain hikes in the hinterlands.

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Rabindra Sadan



Bengali wedding rituals



Bengali Sweet Kolkata



Art Deco architecture spread across Kolkata



A jatra actor prepares before the performance, Sunderbans

## Culture

The people of West Bengal pride themselves on being extremely in tune with culture, the arts and literature. Many famous authors, artists, poets, and filmmakers hail from West Bengal.

Kolkata is dotted with bookstores and literary clubs, old gymkhanas and art galleries. It has a thriving arts and theatre scene as well. There are many famous theatre's and performing arts centres such as the Academy of It must be noted though, that the culture witnessed in Kolkata is significantly different from that seen in, say Darjeeling, which has more Buddhist influences.

The state is a potpourri of influences and cultures. From the unique food, dress and traditions of the Bengali Hindus, to the Buddhists of the hills, the Chinese influences, the Anglo-Indians and the Muslim communities, each of them have brought something different to the state, making it such an interesting experience for tourists. In addition to that, the sheer diversity of landscapes, experiences, food, and even adventure activities, make it an extremely viable option for tourists. **HAI**



# How Can You Buy or Sell the Sky?

For sustainability to become a reality, each proud member of the Hospitality fraternity must be ready to play his/her role in this challenging journey. The industry must be resilient in its operations, regenerative in resource management, and synthesize with responsible and restorative principles of a circular economy.

**By MP BEZBARUAH**  
Secretary General, Hotel Association of India



"Whatever I dig of you, O Earth,  
May you of that have quick replenishment!  
O Purifying one, may my thrust never  
Reach right unto your vital points, your heart!"  
—VEDIC HYMN

The concern for sustainability is ancient. However, the progress of civilization shows that the journey of mankind was not harmonized with concern for that significant message. The dilemma of modern society is beautifully illustrated in the oft-quoted story of the Red Indian tribal chief of the Duwamish tribe, Chief Shealth who, when requested by the then President of USA, Benjamin Peirce, in 1855 to hand over their land, which is now the state of Washington replied:

"How can you buy or sell the sky—the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. Yet we do not own the freshness of the air or the sparkle of the water. How can you buy them from us? ...Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. For all things share the same breath—the beasts, the trees, and the man. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench."

It required a small virus—COVID-19—to rock the world into consciousness. Public memory is short. The utter

**Globally it is now well established that tourism and hospitality is an important means of inclusive development. It is more people-centric than any other industry and both the multiplier and ripple effects of tourism and hospitality spread far and wide**

helplessness of human beings in those fateful years may soon be forgotten, but to shift away from the lessons learnt will be fatal.

The lesson at the top is loud and clear: sustainability is the key to survival. It follows that the travel and hospitality industry must accept it as a credo for future existence. The road to that end has often been described in different ways, like the early World Bank concept of the Triple Bottom Line of economic, social, and environmental, which became ESG or economic, social, and governance, and now "Lifestyle for Environment". Each approach has its own strength and limitations but each in itself may fall short of the total picture. The need for a harmonious, wholesome approach to sustainability has been beautifully explained in the landmark report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, called 'Our Common Future'. It says: "Sustainable development is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional changes are all in harmony ..."

All post-COVID economic discussions have put, along with sustainability, "people" at the centre of any future action. The Tbilisi Declaration of the Travel and Tourism summit during the peak of covid-19 put people first followed by the planet and prosperity as future goals.

The S of ESG—social action—revolves around people. They are good guiding principles to follow for the industry to achieve sustainable objectives. For example, it is often stated that the social objectives of ESG cover the important supply-side issues like fair wages, gender equality, social security and safety of workers, etc. Such concerns for social goals should go beyond the obligation of corporate social responsibility to become an integral part of business strategies. The Securities &



**Edmund Burke said: “Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little”**

Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has designed the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reports (BRSR) for the top 1,000 listed companies to sensitize industries to ESG.

Way back in 1992 the Earth Summit in Rio, had recognized that hunger and poverty are both a cause and an effect of environmental degradation. The Bruntland Commission had stated that a world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes. Sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs”. For the poor, the future is meaningless; for, as Keynes said, in the long run, we are all dead. Therefore, positive action to reduce poverty or to provide alternative economic means to the poor is an important element of a sustainable strategy.

In such a strategy tourism and hospitality can play a very positive role. Globally it is now well established that tourism and hospitality is an important means of inclusive development. It is more people-centric than any other industry and both the multiplier and ripple effects of tourism and hospitality spread far and wide. Recent policy announcements have shown that in India too, this role of the sector is recognized.

It will be essential to harness this role through constructive public-private participation, where the government facilitates sustainable practices, and the industry proactively pursues them. New challenges will have to be met with new responses.

In fact, the industry can avoid such a path only at its peril. Various surveys, for example, McKinsey, WTTC, Sustainable Travel Report 2023, and so on, show that sustainable consumerism is here to stay. 70-75% of global travellers surveyed were looking for sustainable travel options.

Unfortunately, the hollowness of global action is the greatest worry for the future. As the new millennium started, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were launched with much hope and optimism. After a decade,

As the new millennium started, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were launched with much hope and optimism. After a decade, the review woefully stated: “The window of opportunity is rapidly narrowing and the political will remains largely absent”

the review woefully stated: “The window of opportunity is rapidly narrowing and the political will remains largely absent.”

Then the world renewed its pledge on SDGs. There are disturbing reports that only about 13% of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) agreed upon in 2015 have been achieved, and for about 50% there are no mentionable actions at all. In India too, some reports say that tinkering with the Forest Conservation Act has resulted in the diversion of 600,000 hectares (6000 square km) of prime forests for non-forestry use. That brings into focus the perennial problem of adjusting between development and the environment, and the importance of harmony in governance action. And on the threatening issue of climate change, amidst the interminable debates and discussions, the only progress towards the declared goals is—what the UN Secretary-General has described as “climate hell”.

In such a gloomy situation, the commitments of the hospitality sector, its awareness of the emerging issues, its resolve to face them, and its capacity to think of and pursue out-of-the-box solutions inspire hope. This journey of sustainability is endless, and there is no stoppage. Much remains to be done. The awareness and innovations must percolate down to the small and medium enterprises, that are the fulcrum of the industry.

In this fast-changing world, vast new vistas for the transformative power of Travel and Tourism have opened. Ministry of Tourism’s Travel for LiFE campaign creates awareness about sustainable tourism and is aimed to nudge tourists and tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices synchronous with nature.

John Elkington, well known for his work on corporate responsibility, in his new book “Green Swans” goes beyond and argues that sustainability no doubt is the essential goal, but in a world beset with myriad challenges—technological, economic, environmental, existential—sustainability must be seen in a dynamic context. In that context, business and hospitality industry’s transformative role must move beyond sustainability. The industry must be resilient in its operations, regenerative in resource management, and synthesize with responsible and restorative principles of a circular economy.

As Edmund Burke said: “Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.” Sustainability will be a reality, when each proud member of the Hospitality fraternity, is ready to play his/her role in this challenging journey. **HAI**



# Coca-Cola India's vision of a greener, more circular future

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## 2,000

PET bottles were used for crafting each ICC Unity flag

## 11,000

PET bottles were used for crafting each National flag

This ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023, collaborating with ICC, we introduced national flags made from rPET yarn created from post-consumer PET bottles.



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