

Lemon Tree Hotels looking at buying resorts

Aims to have 10-12 resorts in 3-4 years

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Lemon Tree Hotels is looking at acquiring resorts to expand its portfolio and cash in on the growing demand by domestic travellers.

"We currently have three operational resorts – Goa, Aurangabad, Alleppey – and two under construction in Shimla and Udaipur. We want to have 10-12 resorts in the next three-four years," Patanjali G Keswani, Chairman and Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels, told *BusinessLine*.

The hospitality group aims to go in for acquisitions as well as organic expansion.

"Right now, we are looking at acquiring some resorts. More

and more people will want to go on holidays in the next five years. There are not enough branded resorts in India. Most of the current resorts are in the luxury segment. We are looking at acquisitions as well as buying plots to build our own resorts," Keswani added.

Hotel expansion

In India, Lemon Tree currently operates 3,000 rooms across 27 hotels and owns most of them. It also has a subsidiary – Carnation Hotels – to manage hotels owned by others.

"We are currently building nine more hotels, which would have 1,500 rooms. By 2018, our target is to have ownership of



Patanjali G Keswani, Chairman and Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels

4,500 hotel rooms and manage 2,500-3,000 rooms through our subsidiary, Carnation Hotels. In

the resorts category, we plan to add 1,000 rooms in the next three years," he added.

Earlier this month, the hospitality group was awarded the 2015 Asian Human Capital Award for building effective strategies to mainstream persons with disability.

The award is jointly sponsored by the Singapore Ministry of Manpower and the Human Capital Leadership Institute.

Staff strength

An 'equal opportunities' employer, Lemon Tree said it started recruiting persons with speech and hearing impairments in 2007.

"Over time, we also started hiring people with visual and orthopaedic impairment, and later people with Down's syndrome. In 2010, we identified a

new category of people – opportunity-disabled people – i.e. those from socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds," he said.

At present, 1,000 people, out of its total staff strength of 3,000, are either from underprivileged backgrounds or are employees with disabilities (EWDs).

"By 2020, we plan to raise this number from 1,000 to 5,000. This means, in five years, the total Lemon Tree staff strength will be 10,000, of which 50 per cent will be from such backgrounds."

The group, founded in 2002, operates three brands – Lemon Tree Premier, Lemon Tree and Red Fox.