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1

Display: 2/38

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September 2024

18 Cover Story

Power & Panache

Presenting the most influential and powerful leaders of India's hospitality industry!

Ajay K Bakaya, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels; and Director, Louvre Hotels India 20

Anil Chadha, Chief Executive, ITC Hotels 24

Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Executive Officer, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts 26

Arjun Singh Oberoi, Executive Chairman, EIH Limited 28

Atul Chordia, Founder-Chairman, Panchshil Realty 30

Chander Baljee, Chairman and Managing Director, Royal Orchid Hotels Limited 32

Dilip Puri, Founder and Executive Chairman, Indian School of Hospitality 34

Dillip Rajakarier, CEO, Minor Hotels; Group CEO, Minor International 36

Garth Simmons, Chief Operating Officer, Asia, Premium, Midscale & Economy Division, Accor 37

Jaideep Dang, Managing Director, Hotels and Hospitality Group, JLL India 38

Dr Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson and Managing Director, The Lalit Suri, Hospitality Group 39

Kapil Chopra, Founder and CEO, The Postcard Hotel; Chairman of the Board, EazyDiner 40

K B Kachru, Chairman, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group; President, Hotel Association of India 41

Manav Thadani, Founder-Chairman, Hotelivate 42

Nikhil Sharma, Managing Director and Area Senior Vice President,South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group 43

Nirupa Shankar, Joint Managing Director, Brigade Enterprises Ltd 44

Param Kannampilly, Chairman and Managing Director, Concept Hospitality 45

Patanjali (Patu) G Keswani, Chairman and Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd 46

Priya Paul, Chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Ltd 47

Rahul Chaudhary, Managing Director, CG Corp; and CEO, CG Hospitality 48

Ranju Alex, Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International 49

Sanjay Sethi, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Chalet Hotels Limited 50

Satyen Jain, Chief Executive Officer, Pride Hotels Group 51

Sonica Malhotra Kandhari, Joint Managing Director, MBD Group 52

Souvagya Mohapatra, Managing Director (India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka), Atmosphere Core 53

Dr Suborno Bose, Founder-Chairman, International Institute of Hotel Management, IIHM 54

Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts 55

Sunjae Sharma, Managing Director, India & Southwest Asia, Hyatt India Consultancy Private Limited 56

Vijay Thacker, Director, Horwath HTL India 57

Vikram Lalvani, Managing Director and CEO, Sterling Holiday Resorts Ltd 58

Vikramjit Singh Oberoi, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, EIH Limited 59

Vishal Vithal Kamat, Executive Director, Kamat Hotels India Ltd 60

Zaid Sadiq, Executive Director, Liaison and Hospitality, Prestige Group 61

Zubin Saxena, Senior Vice President & Regional Head, Hilton - South Asia 62

Published Date:	30 Sep 2024	Publication:	Hotelier India [National]
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Power & Panache

Hotelier India's annual 'Power List' serves as a recognition of the most influential and impactful figures shaping the future of the hospitality industry in India.

This exclusive compilation highlights visionaries, innovators, and leaders who have set new benchmarks in hospitality through their contributions, strategies, and achievements.

From hotel magnates to tech pioneers and sustainability advocates, these individuals have navigated changing trends, embraced technology, and championed sustainability, all while maintaining a steadfast commitment to exceptional service and guest satisfaction.

Hotelier India celebrates its 16th Anniversary by raising a toast to the Legends & Icons of Indian hospitality!

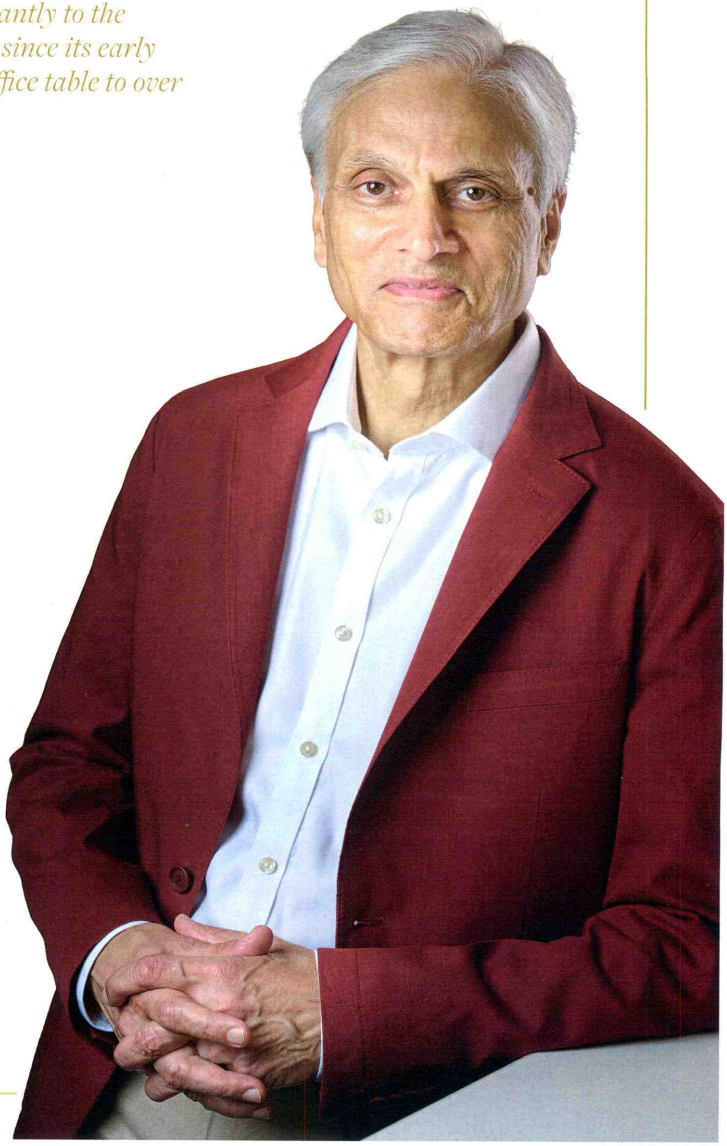
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Ajay Bakaya has contributed significantly to the phenomenal growth story of Sarovar since its early inception, beginning from a shared office table to over 100 hotels today.



1

AJAY K BAKAYA

Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels; and Director, Louvre Hotels India

A trailblazer in Indian hospitality, Ajay K Bakaya is an experienced hotelier with 45 years of work in India, Africa, Australia, France and the UK. He has contributed significantly to the phenomenal growth story of Sarovar since its early inception, beginning from a shared office table to over 100 hotels today.

Bakaya was Director, Rooms, at Australia's largest hotel, now the 878-room Hyatt Regency, Sydney. He was a GM with Oberoi Hotels at the age of 31 years. An MBA alumni of IMHI (Cornell – ESSEC, France), he is a graduate of the Oberoi School, and a Bachelor of Science. A leader with entrepreneurial zeal, he has been awarded 'Hall of Fame', 'Entrepreneur of the Year' and 'CEO of the Year' in India.

His global experience includes extensive work across India, Australia, Africa, France and Scotland.

An avid cyclist, he completed the 1,000 km Tour of Nilgiris in 2017.

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As Chief Executive, Anil Chadha's focus on leveraging the asset-right strategy has catapulted ITC Hotels' growth to a new high.

1

ANIL CHADHA

Chief Executive,
ITC Hotels



With over three decades of experience, Anil Chadha has been an integral part of the ITC Hotel Group and has played a pivotal role in overseeing the seamless functioning of a diverse portfolio of brands. As Chief Executive, his focus on leveraging the asset-right strategy has catapulted ITC Hotels' growth to a new high. He steered the chain's international foray with the opening of ITC Ratnadipa in Colombo recently. From ITC Hotels, Welcomhotel, Fortune and WelcomHeritage to the recent addition of new brands Mementos in the luxury space and Storii in the premium segment, he endeavours to further enlarge the group's footprint.

An alumnus of the Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Chadha joined ITC in 1992. He has spent his entire career with ITC Hotels, heading the southern region and key properties in the metros, holding key positions.

He has implemented innovative service standards and efficiency enhancements, optimising hotel operations for superior guest experiences and earning a distinctive reputation for the brand.

Chadha's passion for Food & Beverage fructified in creating new brands for the chain and an award-winning array of restaurants.

This acumen found greater expression at the G20 Summit in New Delhi where he steered ITC Hotels to curate and serve the finest cuisine experience to global leaders.

Chadha's achievements are manifest in the numerous recognitions including Hotelier of the Year by BBC Food Awards-2018, and Best CEO 2022 by WE Global Employees Choice Award.

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Dubbed the 'Man with the Midas Touch', Anuraag Bhatnagar is currently focused on reinforcing and elevating The Leela's stature as the pinnacle of Indian luxury while steering the brand towards future growth.



ANURAAG BHATNAGAR

Chief Executive Officer,
The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts

Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Executive Officer of The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, is a dynamic leader with an illustrious career spanning over 35 years in the hospitality industry. Renowned for his strategic vision and inspirational leadership, he has led some of the world's most prestigious Indian and international hotel brands.

Dubbed the 'Man with the Midas Touch', he is currently focused on reinforcing and elevating The Leela's stature as the pinnacle of Indian luxury while steering the brand towards future growth.

Since joining The Leela in 2020, he has led the brand to become a leader in every market in which it operates. Under his leadership, The Leela has consistently earned top honours, including World's Best Hotel Brand by Travel + Leisure World's Best Awards in 2020 and 2021, and maintaining a position among the top three brands in 2023 and 2024. His strategic vision has also driven the brand's expansion from seven to 12 luxury hotels. His commitment to innovation is evident through the launch of signature initiatives such as Aujasya by The Leela.

Bhatnagar's journey in luxury hospitality began with The Oberoi Group of Hotels. He then took on significant roles at Starwood Hotels and Resorts, and later at Marriott International.

Outside of his professional pursuits, he is an avid whisky and culinary aficionado with a newfound passion for fitness. He enjoys films, music, reading, and trekking. Above all, he is a devoted family man, cherishing the time spent with his wife, son, and their two dogs.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	28
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1

Arjun Oberoi has worked closely with the Late PRS Oberoi, Former Executive Chairman, EIH Limited, to plan and develop many Oberoi and Trident Hotels.



ARJUN SINGH OBEROI

Executive Chairman,
EIH Limited

Arjun Singh Oberoi is the Executive Chairman of EIH Limited.

Oberoi has been an Executive Director of the Company for over two decades and has over 30 years of experience in the hotel industry. He has a strong foundation in hotel operations dating back to the early part of his career.

Oberoi has also worked closely with the Late PRS Oberoi, Former Executive Chairman, EIH Limited, to plan and develop many Oberoi and Trident Hotels.

In his previous role, he was responsible for the Project Development team of The Oberoi Group. He took on this role when he joined the Corporate Office of EIH Limited in 1996. He has also been a member of The Oberoi Group and McKinsey & Company team responsible for re-engineering systems and processes within the food and beverage departments of 'The Oberoi' city hotels.

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ATUL CHORDIA

Founder-Chairman,
Panchshil Realty

A pioneer in excellence and innovation, Atul Chordia's business sense and motivation to provide only the best has successfully led Panchshil Realty to collaborate with global brands across various verticals.

Founder and Chairman of Panchshil Realty, Atul Chordia has helped redefine high-end luxury real estate in India for the past three decades. Since its inception in 2002, Panchshil has delivered 29.5 million sq. ft. of office parks, and residential and hospitality developments in Pune and Mumbai. With over 27.5 million sq. ft. currently under development, Panchshil has been synonymous with changing Pune's skyline and global status through world-class architecture.

A pioneer in excellence and innovation, Chordia's business sense and motivation to provide only the best have successfully led Panchshil Realty to collaborate with global brands across various business verticals such as luxury housing, hospitality and retail. From building one of South Asia's largest convention centres - ICC and India's first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) - EON Free Zone, to introducing to the city of Pune a whole new world in international hospitality extended by prestigious brands such as Marriott International, and Oakwood, and above all introducing to the people of Pune a life of luxury in collaboration with brands such as YOO and the Trump Organization, Chordia has led Panchshil Realty to the upper echelons of the business world.

In his pursuit of adding "value" to the city, Chordia also prioritizes quality construction and innovation in his projects that showcase his unwavering commitment to elevating India's construction practices.

Rooted in his profound cultural connection with Pune, Chordia started the Panchshil Foundation that leads numerous community initiatives, with a key focus on education, healthcare, sports, arts, culture, and environmental initiatives.



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Chander Baljee specializes in the setting up and profitable running of the group's hotels and is a 'go-to' expert for owned, leased, managed and franchised hotel models.

1

CHANDER BALJEE

Chairman and Managing Director,
Royal Orchid Hotels Limited

A veteran with 50 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Chander Baljee currently serves as the Chairman and Managing Director of Royal Orchid Hotels Limited, a public company listed on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) in India.

A thought leader in the ever-evolving hospitality space, Baljee has to his credit many achievements, including the rapid setup and expansion of one of India's foremost chain hotel brands, Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels. The brand today successfully operates over 6,395+ rooms and 175+ restaurants in 107+ hotels across 70+ locations in the luxury, upper mid-market and budget hotel categories in India.

Baljee specializes in the setting up and profitable running of hotels and is a 'go-to' expert for owned, leased, managed and franchised hotel models. His success story features in the book titled 'Stay Hungry Stay Foolish' authored by Rashmi Bansal which follows the professional journey of 25 IIM Ahmedabad entrepreneurs.

Baljee has lent his experience to various organizations by serving on the tourism committee, both, at the Bangalore Chamber of Commerce & Industry as well as the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). He was also a council member of the All India Management Association (AIMA).



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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	34
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1



Since founding the Indian School of Hospitality, Dilip Puri has been a mentor and leader for students and aspiring hospitality professionals.

DILIP PURI

Founder and Executive Chairman, Indian School of Hospitality

Dilip Puri is the Founder and Executive Chairman of the Indian School of Hospitality (ISH), an institution of higher education focused on reshaping hospitality, culinary arts and executive education for today's generation and tomorrow's businesses. He served as the Managing Director of Starwood Hotels & Resorts, South Asia, from 2011 till the end of 2017, when he set out to be an education entrepreneur and founded ISH.

Puri has over three decades of experience in the hospitality industry and has worked with brands such as Oberoi, Taj, IHG, and Starwood in India, Australia and Africa. He has an Economics degree from the University of Delhi and completed his postgraduate studies at the Oberoi Centre of Learning & Development (OCLD).

Since founding the Indian School of Hospitality, Puri has been a mentor and leader for students and aspiring hospitality professionals. ISH is a part of Sommet Education and offers programs in alliance with École Ducasse and Les Roches - two of the world's leading institutes for higher education in hospitality and the culinary arts.

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Since taking the reins of Minor Hotels as CEO, Dillip Rajakarier has been instrumental in driving the company's global expansion, and today he oversees more than 550 properties in 56 countries.



DILLIP RAJAKARIER

Chief Executive Officer,
Minor Hotels; Group CEO, Minor International

1

Dillip Rajakarier is Group CEO of Minor International and CEO of Minor Hotels, presiding over one of the world's largest and fastest-growing hospitality companies. The group had a portfolio of 12 hotels concentrated in Southeast Asia when Rajakarier joined in 2007 as Chief Finance & Investment Officer.

Since taking the reins of Minor Hotels as CEO in 2011, he has been instrumental in driving the company's rapid global expansion, and today he oversees more than 550 properties in 56 countries across a growing portfolio of globally-recognized hotel and lifestyle brands.

A seasoned hotelier who joined Minor Hotels from Orient-Express Hotels, Trains & Cruises (now known as Belmond), Rajakarier's professional background in finance and IT has made him an advocate for driving operational performance through technological innovation, helping to position Minor as an industry trailblazer in digital transformation.

Before his appointment as CEO of Minor Hotels, he served as the company's COO. He has earned a reputation as an astute dealmaker, driving Minor Hotels' global expansion through high-profile acquisitions and partnerships. Among the most notable have been the acquisition of Spain's NH Hotel Group in 2018 and the full acquisition of The Wolseley Hospitality Group in the UK in 2022.

A British national, Rajakarier completed his MBA in the UK and spent more than 20 years in London before relocating to Bangkok to join Minor Hotels.

As Group CEO of Minor International, Rajakarier also oversees Minor's food and lifestyle businesses, which include roughly 2,600 dining outlets, and nearly 400 retail points of sale globally.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	37
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In his most recent role as COO, Garth Simmons is responsible for over 200 hotels and 16 brands across six countries.

1

GARTH SIMMONS

Chief Operating Officer,
Asia, Premium, Midscale & Economy Division, Accor



Garth Simmons is the Chief Operating Officer of Accor, Premium, Midscale & Economy Division across Asia. The region comprises over 400 hotels (92,000+ rooms) and a pipeline of 200+ hotels (52,000+ rooms) under Accor's renowned Premium, Midscale and Economy brands including Pullman, Mövenpick, Novotel, Mercure and ibis.

Simmons began his hospitality career in 1988 with the Rydges Hotels & Resorts in Australia before becoming a General Manager in 1998, and Area General Manager. He joined Accor in 2007 in various strategic positions within Australia, before expanding his portfolio to New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory properties. In addition, he also managed Qantas' First Class Lounges at Sydney and Melbourne Airports.

In 2012, Simmons took on the role of Senior Vice President for Accor New Zealand, Fiji, French Polynesia and Japan. He sat on the board of the New Zealand Tourism Industry Association. Ultimately, he was instrumental in building Accor's position as New Zealand's largest operator.

Moving to Indonesia in 2015 as Chief Operating Officer of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, he reinforced Accor's leadership position. In his most recent role as COO, he is responsible for over 200 hotels and 16 brands across six countries.

A strong advocate of giving back to the local community, Simmons has been volunteering and lending his voice to fundraising through initiatives like the Accor Race to Survive Fiji for Cure Kids, A Trust For A Child Foundation, and the Achieving The Dream initiative.

Published Date:	30 Sep 2024	Publication:	Hotelier India [National]
Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	38
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Jaideep Dang has built a successful practice wherein JLL Hotels has taken the leadership position in hotel investment sales in India.

JAIDEEP DANG

Managing Director,
Hotels and Hospitality Group, JLL India

1

Jaideep Dang leads the Hotel Advisory and Transactions business for JLL in India and South Asia. His responsibility is to operate and manage the P&L and grow the hotels' business within the capital markets fold. He has built a successful practice wherein JLL Hotels has taken the leadership position in hotel investment sales in India. He has consistently delivered profitability and grown the revenue five-fold after taking over in 2018. He has built a team of motivated professionals, who have consistently delivered valuable advice to clients on hotel project feasibilities, valuations, etc.

In this pursuit, Dang reports to JLL's Asia Pacific headquarters yet works closely with the India capital markets business to integrate best practices and ensure seamless service delivery to the clients.

Well-connected within the hospitality and real estate industry, he works closely with industry stakeholders both in the private and government sectors. With an experience of over 21 years in the real estate and hotel industry, he has worked with JLL previously between 2003 and 2010 in the hotels, luxury retail and residential advisory and transactions business.

Thereafter, he worked as Senior Vice President, Strategic Development, with the Oberoi group for eight years, working closely with the industry legend, PRS Oberoi across projects and geographies. He was responsible for the growth and development of the Oberoi and Trident Hotels worldwide, as well as managing investor relationships at the project level and later the board level. He left the Oberoi group and rejoined JLL in his current leadership role in 2018.



Published Date:	30 Sep 2024	Publication:	Hotelier India [National]
Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	39
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Under Dr Jyotsna Suri's stewardship, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group became one of the leading privately-owned domestic hotel brands in India, with a focus on the luxury segment.

DR JYOTSNA SURI

Chairperson and Managing Director, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group

Dr Jyotsna Suri has been associated with Bharat Hotels since its inception. In 2006, she took on the mantle of Chairperson and Managing Director. Under her stewardship, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group became one of the leading privately-owned domestic hotel brands in India, with a focus on the luxury segment. The group operates 12 luxury hotels, palaces and resorts under The LaLiT brand and two mid-segment hotels under The LaLiT Traveller brand across India's key business and leisure travel destinations.

Over the years, Dr Suri has been a recipient of over 30 national and international awards and recognitions. In November 2019, she was conferred with the Order of The Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star by the Japanese government for her contribution towards strengthening strategic ties between India and Japan in the economic and tourism sectors. She is the first Indian woman to have received the imperial honor, since its commencement for foreign nationals in 1981.

Dr Suri holds various portfolios with industry associations – Past President, FICCI; Mentor, FICCI Tourism & Culture Committee; Mentor, FICCI DE&I Task Force, Executive Member of HAI; Vice Chairperson of the World Travel and Tourism Council, India Initiative (WTTCII) Member of Board of Governors for National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology and Member of Board of Governors of Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	40
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The award-winning brand has been resolute in developing the most intimate yet highly differentiated experiential stays for guests in hidden destinations since 2018, while building a bold new narrative around personalised luxury.



KAPIL CHOPRA

Founder and CEO, The Postcard Hotel; Chairman of the Board, EazyDiner

Kapil Chopra is the Founder of The Postcard Hotel. The award-winning brand has been resolute in developing the most intimate yet highly differentiated experiential stays for guests in hidden destinations since 2018, while building a bold new narrative around personalised luxury. For the second year in a row, The Postcard Hotel brand has received the distinguished title of Asia's Leading Boutique Hotel Brand at the prestigious World Travel Awards. Additionally, The Postcard Hotel, Gir, has been bestowed with the recognition of Asia's Leading Wildlife Resort, while The Postcard on the Arabian Sea has been acclaimed as Asia's Leading Boutique Hotel. He is also the Chairman of the Board for EazyDiner, India's largest instant restaurant reservations app.

Besides being a hotelier and entrepreneur, Chopra is an avid collector of Indian contemporary art and writes for various national and international publications.

Passionate about reforming healthcare in India, he also mentors the country's most significant public health initiative, charitybeds.com which facilitates hospital admissions for the economically challenged sections of society.

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An active member of various tourism and hospitality advisory committees, K B Kachru has been instrumental in building Radisson's business in South Asia since 1998.

K B KACHRU

Chairman, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group & President, Hotel Association of India



K B Kachru is Chairman of the Radisson Hotel group in South Asia and has been instrumental in building the group's business in South Asia since 1998. He continues to be on the governing board of the group's South Asia business entities including RHG's joint venture companies.

An active member of various tourism and hospitality advisory committees, he is presently President of the Hotel Association of India, on the executive council of the Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council, and a member of the Confederation of Indian Industry-National Tourism Committee.

He has been on the board of directors for the Tourism Corporation of various state governments and on the board of governors of the Institute of Hotel Management, New Delhi. He was also appointed to the governing board of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Trust, J&K. He has served as an executive member of the Pacific Asia Travel Association India Chapter, the American Society of Travel Agents of India, the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Association of India, and the India Convention Promotion Bureau.

He spearheaded the formation of the Institute for International Management and Technology in collaboration with Oxford Brookes University, UK. During his tenure at India Tourism Development Corporation, he led the Ashok Group of Hotels and introduced arrival duty-free shopping at all international airports in India.

Kachru has been awarded the Carslon Fellowship by Carlson Companies, USA and has received global recognition for his contribution to tourism at WTM London, UK and ITB Berlin, Germany.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	42
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Under Manav Thadani's leadership, Hotelivate has become a trusted advisor to hotel owners, operators, and investors, known for its in-depth market knowledge and innovative solutions.



MANAV THADANI

Founder-Chairman, Hotelivate

Manav Thadani is the Founder-Chairman of Hotelivate, a leading hospitality consulting firm that offers a curated suite of services, including asset management, and executive search for service firms. With offices in Delhi, Mumbai, Singapore, Bangkok, and Dubai, Hotelivate is led by a team of consultants boasting over 250 years of collective experience. Under Thadani's leadership, Hotelivate has become a trusted advisor to hotel owners, operators, and investors, known for its in-depth market knowledge and innovative solutions.

Previously, Thadani was the Chairman of HVS in the Asia-Pacific region, where he was instrumental in establishing HVS in India in 1997. As the company's first employee in Asia, he grew HVS into a powerful consulting, valuation, and executive search firm in the region.

Thadani has also ventured into hotel ownership on behalf of foreign institutional capital through SAMHI, a leading hotel investment and development firm in India. SAMHI focuses on owning branded hotels in the upscale and mid-scale segments across key Indian cities, with a portfolio that includes over 4,801 rooms across 31 hotels in 14 cities. SAMHI Hotels went public via an IPO in 2023, and Thadani currently serves on its board.

Beyond consulting, Thadani is also a successful restaurateur. His two restaurant ventures - Inja, an Indian Japanese fusion and Camillo's are characterized by a focus on quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction, mirroring the same principles that have driven his success in hotel consulting. This dual expertise further cements his reputation as a versatile and influential leader in the broader hospitality industry.

Published Date:	30 Sep 2024	Publication:	Hotelier India [National]
Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	43
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Nikhil Sharma is responsible for leading the group's operations in the dynamic South Asia region, which has over 180 hotels in operation and development.



NIKHIL SHARMA

Managing Director and Area Senior Vice President, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

At RHG, Nikhil is responsible for leading the group's operations in the dynamic South Asia region, which has over 180 hotels in operation and development. With a career spanning over two decades, Sharma brings a wealth of experience and will play a pivotal role in strengthening the group's leadership in the Indian market, nurturing relationships with its partners, driving revenue growth, ensuring operational excellence, and leading the group's vision of being an employer of choice in the hospitality ecosystem.

Prior to joining Radisson, Sharma held the position of Market Managing Director for Eurasia at Wyndham Hotels & Resorts. He was the Chief Operating Officer at Ginger Hotels, part of one of India's largest conglomerates - IHCL. He was also a founding member of the Lemon Tree Hotel Company, building India's fastest-growing upscale hotel brand. He is an active contributor to the hospitality sector in India, serving on committees for various federations and associations.

A degree-holder in Catering and Nutrition from the Institute of Hotel Management Pusa Delhi, he has completed several study programs with reputed institutions such as IIM Bangalore, and Cornell University, New York. His industry accolades include the Excellence in Leadership award at Hospitality Horizon, and Hotelier of the Year, among others.

A published author, Sharma is an active learner and enjoys meditating and going on long walks in his leisure time.

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Nirupa Shankar has spent the past 14 years of her career overseeing the Brigade Group's hotel, office and retail portfolios.



1

NIRUPA SHANKAR

Joint Managing Director
Brigade Enterprises Ltd

Nirupa Shankar is Joint Managing Director at Brigade Group, one of India's leading real estate developers. She has spent the past 14 years of her career overseeing the company's hotel, office and retail portfolios.

Shankar has the serial entrepreneurial bug and has conceptualised award-winning F&B outlets such as HIGH Ultra Lounge and Glass Kitchen & Bar in Bangalore.

In 2016, she set up Asia's first real estate accelerator - Brigade Real Estate Accelerator Program (REAP), to mentor high-tech start-ups in real estate. She launched Brigade's flexible workspaces brand – BuzzWorks in 2019.

Shankar has also launched Earth Fund, a SEBI-approved CAT II fund to invest in technologies that help cities build responsibly.

Prior to joining Brigade, Shankar worked as a Senior Business Analyst with Ernst & Young LLP in the New York and North Carolina offices. She has a bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Virginia and a Master's of Management in Hospitality from Cornell University. She graduated on the Dean's List and as Vice President of her class.

Passionate about writing, Shankar's articles are regularly published in news and trade journals. A speaker at various top-tier forums, conferences, and think tanks, she is also a two-time TEDx speaker.

A fitness enthusiast, Shankar participates in triathlons, recently completing the Ironman Copenhagen 23'. Mother of two daughters, she reads autobiographies and plays poker to unwind.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	45
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Under Param Kannampilly's leadership, The Fern Group expanded to over 104 properties across 85 locations.



PARAM KANNAMPILLY

Chairman & Managing Director,
Concept Hospitality

With over 45 years of active involvement in the hospitality industry, Param Kannampilly's journey from an aspiring doctor to a trailblazer in hospitality is a compelling narrative of adaptability, vision, and dedication.

Beginning with a postgraduate diploma in Hotel Management from IHM Mumbai in 1974-75, after a formative stint at the Taj Group, he transitioned to Goa, managing La Paz. Through the recommendation of Thangam Philip, he started as the Food & Beverage Manager in 1977 at West End Bangalore. Propelled to the position of General Manager by 1980, his efforts extended to setting up flight catering services for the Spencer Group at Bangalore Airport.

In 1984, he joined Fariyas Hotels, followed by The Leela Group in 1989 where he oversaw HR practices and launched The Leela Beach Goa. His tenure at the Raheja Group saw him manage diverse properties and pioneer the first service apartment at Powai.

In the mid-90s, he founded Concept Consultants, a hotel management consultancy.

Collaborating with Dr Vithal Kamat, he helped develop the Orchid Mumbai and VITS as leaders in eco-friendly hospitality, culminating in the establishment of the Orchid as Asia's first Ecotel Hotel.

In 2009, he launched Concept Hospitality Pvt Ltd, which introduced The Fern Hotels & Resorts—synonymous with sustainable luxury and eco-conscious hospitality. Under his leadership, The Fern Group expanded to over 104 properties across 85 locations.

His contributions have been widely recognized, including being conferred the UN Global Futures Network Award (a United Nations affiliate).

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Lemon Tree Hotels has grown into one of the largest hotel chains in India, and owns/ leases/ operates/ franchises hotels across the upscale, upper-midscale, midscale and economy segments.

1

PATANJALI (PATU) G KESWANI

Chairman and Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd



Graduating with a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from IIT Delhi in 1981, Patanjali Keswani subsequently received his PGD in Business Management from IIM Calcutta. He joined TATA Administrative Services in 1983. Working with the TATA Group for 17 years, his last assignment here was as Senior Vice President of the Taj Group of Hotels. Anticipating the enormous yet latent demand for mid-market and economy hotels in India, he promoted Lemon Tree Hotels in 2002. He is currently the Chairman and Managing Director of Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd. which owns and operates 110+ hotels and has 60+ in the pipeline.

Lemon Tree Hotels celebrated its 20th anniversary of operations in 2024. The company has grown into one of the largest hotel chains in India, and owns/ leases/ operates/ franchises hotels across the upscale, upper-midscale, midscale and economy segments. The company has witnessed numerous milestones, including going public with a successful IPO, expanding internationally in Dubai, Bhutan and Nepal, launching over 100 hotels including Aurika, Mumbai Skycity – India's largest hotel by number of rooms, and building numerous brands to cater to guests' varied tastes and requirements.

The company has also focused on offering opportunities to individuals with disability and people from the economically/ socially weak segment. Presently, ~13% of Lemon Tree employees are from this disadvantaged segment. Lemon Tree Hotels has been presented with numerous awards recognizing the company's commitment towards creating a workplace with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, and equal rights for all, including the National award by the President of India.

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As Chairperson of Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels, Priya Paul is the creative powerhouse behind the contemporary luxury boutique THE Park Hotels and the social catalyst brand Zone by The Park.

PRIYA PAUL

Chairperson,
Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Ltd

Priya Paul has played a significant role in various fields including hospitality, and women's empowerment. As Chairperson of Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels, she is the creative powerhouse behind India's leading collection of contemporary luxury boutique hotels – THE Park Hotels and the social catalyst brand – Zone by The Park.

Paul serves on the corporate boards of Apeejay Shipping Limited, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Limited, DLF Limited and DLF Cyber City Developments Limited. An Executive Committee Member of the Hotel Association of India, she has also served as its President. A founding member of the World Travel and Tourism Council – India Initiative, she served as the Chairperson for 2013.

In the non-profit domain, she is the Founder Director and Chair of South Asia Women's Fund, (now Women's Fund Asia) and has been on the board of Breakthrough India. She has been a Trustee of the India Foundation for the Arts, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, board member of National Council of Science Museums and is a member of Harvard Business Schools' South Asia advisory board. She recently joined the board of World Monuments Fund – India and the policy body Population Foundation of India.

A BA in Economics from Wellesley College, she also completed the Owner President Management Program at Harvard Business School.

In 2012, Paul was awarded the Padma Shri and has also been conferred with the Insignia of Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Merite from the President of France, among other awards.



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Rahul Chaudhary's forte lies in forging strategic alliances in established as well as emerging markets, which assists in the growth and development of the company.

RAHUL CHAUDHARY

Managing Director,
CG Corp; and CEO, CG Hospitality

Rahul Chaudhary wears two hats. He is the Managing Director, CG Corp | Global, the global face of Nepal's first and only billion-dollar multinational conglomerate with an exceptional legacy of 140 years across four generations. CG Corp | Global has 123 brands, 160 companies, over 15,000 employees and is spread across 32 countries with industry-leading forays into fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), retail food, banking, hospitality, telecom and education, amongst others.

Chaudhary wears his other hat as Chief Executive Officer, CG Hospitality Holdings, the fast-growing hospitality vertical of CG Corp | Global that comprises over 180 hotels and resorts in 12 countries and 116 destinations with over 11,000 keys. His forte lies in forging strategic alliances in established as well as emerging markets, which assists in the growth and development of the company.

CG Hospitality's successful joint ventures include partnerships with prestigious luxury and hospitality brands and owning some of the most iconic assets globally. Its list of partnering hospitality brands includes the Taj, Taj Safari, Vivanta, Jetwing, Radisson, Ekho, and Fairmont. CG Hospitality owns The Zinc, The Fern, Summit and The Farm brands, amongst others. By 2025, the portfolio is expected to grow to over 200 hotels and 12,000 keys.

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Ranju Alex's work towards gender diversity has resulted in her being invited by several countries as a keynote speaker on women's issues.

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RANJU ALEX

Area Vice President, South Asia, Marriott International



Ranju Alex is the Area Vice President, South Asia for Marriott International, encompassing 166 properties across 17 brands (managed and franchised) with over 28,000 rooms, across more than 40 cities. Prior to this appointment, Alex was the Market Vice President for West India. She brings close to three decades of experience in the hospitality industry, with over 12 years with Marriott International.

An alumnus of IHM Kolkata, she started her hospitality career with the Oberoi group of hotels where she worked for 18 years. She enjoys the diversity of dealing with guests, meeting individually with department heads, exploring opportunities for improvement, solving problems, and moving forward together as a team.

Her work towards gender diversity has resulted in her being invited by several countries as a keynote speaker on women's issues. Noteworthy awards she has bagged include the Women of the Decade in Business & Leadership award at the Women Economic Forum, UK.

Her commitment to work has never come in the way of her leading a fulfilling personal life. She acknowledges that her husband and children are her greatest treasures. Health conscious, she loves tennis and swimming, as well as cooking and traveling.

Some of the brand's recent achievements under her leadership include:

- Celebrating Marriott International's 25th year in India.
- Opening the Katra Marriott Resort & Spa, Marriott's 150th hotel in India.
- Introducing the fun and youthful Moxy brand in South Asia, marking MI's 17th brand.
- Launching the Marriott Bonvoy HDFC Bank credit card.

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An active member and speaker at key industry bodies and events, Sanjay Sethi is the Honorary Treasurer of the Hotel Association of India, the Chair of CII Regional Tourism Council, and a member in the real estate committee of FICCI.

SANJAY SETHI

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Chalet Hotels Limited



Sanjay Sethi is the Managing Director and CEO of Chalet Hotels Ltd (CHL), with a portfolio spanning over 3,050 keys and 2.4+ million square feet of office space. An industry veteran and respected business leader, he has been instrumental in the growth of CHL, delivering shareholder value.

His transformational leadership skills resulted in ensuring the company delivers industry-leading EBITDA margins reported by hotel companies in India. CHL is currently the third-largest hotel company in India by market cap. The company's growth underscores his strategic vision and commitment to operational excellence, and uniquely positions CHL to capitalize on favourable trends in the Indian hospitality sector. In the last fiscal, the company managed to expand its portfolio by adding two new high-end hotels, broadening the geographical reach and consumer segments.

He is committed to creating a flourishing and inclusive environment. CHL, under Sethi, enhanced its sustainability performance which is reflected in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index with a score of 57 (CSA Score Date 16/02/2024). CHL achieved a unique feat by becoming the first hospitality company across the globe to join the 3 key Climate Group initiatives RE100, EP100 and EV100.

An active member and speaker at key industry bodies and events, Sethi is the Honorary Treasurer of the Hotel Association of India, the Chair of CII Regional Tourism Council, and a member in the real estate committee of FICCI. He is the Advisory Board Member of the International Hospitality Investment Forum, Asia. His contributions have been widely recognized with numerous awards.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	51
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As the CEO of Pride Hotels, Satyen Jain has overseen the rapid expansion of the group across major cities in India, taking the chain from 16 hotels to 60 hotels as of 2024.



SATYEN JAIN

Chief Executive Officer,
Pride Hotels Group

Satyen Jain, a visionary leader in the Indian hospitality sector, has consistently driven excellence and innovation throughout his career.

As the CEO of Pride Hotels, he has overseen the rapid expansion of the group across major cities in India, including a focus on both upscale hotels and leisure resorts, taking the chain from 16 hotels to 60 hotels as of 2024.

Under his visionary leadership, the group aims to have 133 hotels by 2033. Recognized for his entrepreneurial spirit, Jain was awarded the Young Hotel Entrepreneur of the Year in 2007 by FHRAI.

Most recently, in 2024, he was recognized by the H&RA Western India for Excellent Contribution to the Hospitality Industry, underscoring his commitment to service, innovation, and the growth of the hospitality industry in India.

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Sonica Malhotra Kandhari has been directing the MBD group's strategy and is also responsible for branding, positioning and assisting in expansion plans.

SONICA MALHOTRA KANDHARI

Joint Managing Director,
MBD Group

Joint Managing Director of MBD group, Sonica Malhotra Kandhari is taking powerful strides in hospitality, real estate, retail and mall development ventures. She has been directing the group's strategy and is also responsible for branding, positioning and assisting in expansion plans. She works closely with her sister Monica Malhotra Kandhari, MD of MBD group, who handles the group's education and publishing business.

Under her aegis, MBD forayed into hospitality around 19 years ago. Entering into a franchise with Radisson Hotels & Resorts, MBD opened its maiden venture The Radisson Blu MBD Hotel, Noida. She replicated the success story by establishing Radisson Blu Hotel MBD, Ludhiana - the city's first five-star hotel. She introduced premium and luxury brands in Punjab with MBD Neopolis, Ludhiana and Jalandhar – mixed-use developments entailing five-star hotels, premium and luxury retail malls and a multiplex. Under her leadership, the company entered into a joint venture with the Steigenberger Hotel Group, the largest German chain of hotels and resorts, to manage and franchise hotels for the Indian territory.

Born in Jalandhar and brought up in Delhi, Malhotra Kandhari earned a B.Com degree followed by an MBA in Finance. Further, she completed a leadership development program from Harvard Business School.



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Souvagya Mohapatra's objective is to expand the footprint of Atmosphere Core in the Asia Pacific region, particularly in India.

SOUVAGYA MOHAPATRA

Managing Director (India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka), Atmosphere Core

A dedicated hospitality and tourism industry professional, Souvagya Mohapatra has established a consistent record, over three decades, of success in developing and managing luxury hotels, building guest relations, improving revenue and performance, brand building, and launching properties.

Starting his career with The Oberoi Group, Mohapatra spent a considerable period of his professional career with MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts. During his stint at the MAYFAIR, from a Hotel Manager to the Executive Director of the company, he witnessed the group grow from just two hotels to 12 world-class properties.

Mohapatra is now associated with Atmosphere Core, as the Managing Director for India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka operations. A hospitality group with its registered office in Singapore and corporate office at Maldives, Atmosphere Core manages nine world-class luxurious properties in Maldives located on various islands under three distinctive brands viz. The Ozen Collection (TOC), Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts, and Colours Of Oblu (COB).

His objective is to expand the footprint of Atmosphere Core in the Asia Pacific region, particularly in India. So far under his leadership, Atmosphere Core has signed management contracts with 15 properties in India at exotic destinations such as Kolkata, Bhopal, Coorg, Nandi Hills Bangalore, Kannur, Goa, Nagpur, Darjeeling Hills, Bhubaneswar, Gurugram, etc. He aims to have 25 properties in India in the Atmosphere Core portfolio by 2025.

Contributing to the growth of the sector in India, Mohapatra has been associated with various reputed organizations and national associations including OSTPC, FHRAI, HRAEI, CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM and more.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	54
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Recognized for his passion to revolutionize the hospitality industry through better education, Dr Suborno Bose has been awarded honorary doctorates from Edinburgh Napier University, Queen Margaret University and University of West London, UK.

1



DR SUBORNO BOSE

Founder-Chairman,
International Institute of Hotel Management, IIHM

Dr Suborno Bose is a first-generation entrepreneur and global thought leader of the hospitality industry. A Chartered Accountant by training, he is the Founder of the Indismart Group and the International Institute of Hotel Management, IIHM — a leading chain of hospitality education institutes with centres across India, Bangkok, Samarkand, and Singapore.

A pioneer of hospitality education, Dr Bose started the first private hospitality education institute of East India in 1989. He is the force behind the IIHM International Young Chef Olympiad—the biggest Olympiad for culinary students in the world, with over 60 countries participating each year to promote sustainability and youth diplomacy through culinary exchanges. His initiatives like IIHM Young Chef India, Young Chef India Schools and Young Chef India Schools Junior are the biggest platforms for school children to pursue their interests in the culinary arts.

Recognized for his passion to revolutionize the hospitality industry through better education, Dr Bose has been awarded honorary doctorates from Edinburgh Napier University, Queen Margaret University and University of West London, UK.

Author of two influential books - The Art of Hospitality and The Art of Sustainable Hospitality, he is also a prolific speaker, and has addressed the SCO countries during the 25th General Assembly of UN Tourism in 2023.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	55
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An industry veteran, Sudeep Jain brings more than 17 years' experience in the hospitality sector from roles based in the US and India, working across brand management, asset management and more.

SUDEEP JAIN

Managing Director,
South West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts



In his role with IHG Hotels & Resorts, Sudeep Jain is responsible for strengthening the presence of the company in the South West Asia region which covers India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh. His focus remains supporting the company's growth ambition in the region; expanding on the brands that are well-established in the countries of interest as well as introducing new brands within the IHG portfolio to the market.

An industry veteran, Jain brings more than 17 years' experience in the hospitality sector from roles based in the US and India, working across brand management, asset management, strategy, planning and real estate development. Before joining IHG, he worked with Starwood Hotels & Resorts as Vice President, Acquisitions & Development for South Asia. He has also worked with Starwood in New York, and was involved in developing strategic growth plans in-line with consumer trends and worked with real estate developers in North America.

A graduate of Harvard Business School, Jain started his career with Bain & Company, working in its offices in Singapore, Hong Kong, Sydney and Boston, advising clients across consumer goods, food products, financial services, IT and private equity, on growth strategy and business plans which led to double-digit growth for the clients. He has also worked with Jones Lang LaSalle in India, in the hotels and hospitality group, where he led the development and management of the advisory and transactions services of the company in South Asia.

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Under Sunjae Sharma's leadership, Hyatt has achieved multiple milestones including celebrating 40 years of operations in India, and crossing the 10,000-room milestone in the India and Southwest Asia region.

1



SUNJAE SHARMA

Managing Director,
India & Southwest Asia,
Hyatt India Consultancy Private Limited

As Managing Director, India & Southwest Asia, Hyatt, Sunjae Sharma has been at the helm of executing Hyatt India Consultancy Private Limited's operational and growth strategy in India. Associated with Hyatt for over two decades, he has held several leadership positions within the company, prior to his current role.

A true hotelier at heart, Sharma has been in the hospitality industry for almost three decades. As an industry veteran, he has been a part of the evolution of the hospitality sector in India. He is currently spearheading the ASSOCHAM National Council on Travel & Tourism as Chairperson. He has also contributed to several other hospitality brands prior to starting his stint with Hyatt in 2001.

While he has provided support and strategic oversight to all Hyatt brands in South & West India, under his guidance, Grand Hyatt Mumbai became an international benchmark for Hyatt as a multidimensional lifestyle destination.

He has handled multiple roles at Hyatt's most iconic properties across the country, such as General Manager, Hyatt Regency Chennai and Area Director for Bangalore, Chennai, Hampi, Kathmandu and Kolkata.

Under Sharma's leadership, the brand has achieved multiple milestones including...

- Celebrating 40 years of Hyatt's operations in India.
- Hyatt crossing the 10,000-room milestone in the India and Southwest Asia region.
- Launch of the JdV by the Hyatt brand in India with the opening of Ronil Goa.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	57
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Vijay Thacker's advisory experience covers hotel development, transactions, valuation, strategy, IPO documentation and litigation support; with a recent added focus on risk management.

1

VIJAY THACKER

Director,
Horwath HTL India



With over 37 years of experience in hotel and tourism consulting, Vijay Thacker, a veteran in hospitality and tourism consulting, guides clients to achieve risk-measured growth.

His advisory experience covers hotel development, transactions, valuation, strategy, IPO documentation and litigation support; with a recent added focus on risk management.

Thacker's clients comprise private owners and developers, listed companies, leading global hospitality companies, banks and private equity groups based in India and abroad. Having contributed several knowledge papers, Thacker is also an acclaimed speaker at industry and professional seminars in India and internationally.

As Director of Horwath HTL, a leading global hospitality group spread across 40 countries, Thacker has worked across multiple sectors and service areas engaging with clients from 37 countries. He strongly believes that professional integrity (to the client, to the task and to yourself); hard work, with no short cuts; wide spectrum thinking and solutions-oriented approach; clear communication and pride in quality expression; combine towards the goal of delivering professional excellence.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	58
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VIKRAM LALVANI

MD & CEO,
Sterling Holiday Resorts Ltd

Having specialized in designing and executing turnaround strategies across several lines of business, Vikram Lalvani has, reportedly, pioneered revenue management in the hospitality industry.

Vikram Lalvani is the Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Sterling Holiday Resorts Limited, a leading leisure hospitality brand in India. He has over 27 years of incisive leadership experience in the hospitality, leisure and ITeS industries. Having specialized in designing and executing turnaround strategies across several lines of business, he has, reportedly, pioneered revenue management in the hospitality industry.

The initial 12 years of his career were with Taj Hotels across multiple functions – revenue management, business development and resort operations.

He has coupled his hospitality skills with IT & ITES business processes, having led operations in the India and Asia Pacific regions for Sutherland Global Services for over four years.

Lalvani has brought this rich experience, his business acumen and vision, and an entrepreneurial mindset to bear in Sterling for the past seven years and over. He has overseen several strategic responsibilities including customer engagement, revenue maximization, hotel sales, resort operations and business development before taking on the position of managing director and CEO.

Transforming the company's business model for scalability, he has made Sterling into a profitable hospitality company, and has designed and developed tech-enabled business process solutions that drive enablement for customers, partners and associates.

A mechanical engineer and MBA, he holds specialized certifications in leadership accelerated programs from the Wharton Business School, Cornell University, and IIMs.

A movie enthusiast, Lalvani loves to travel. He combines his passions with his job as he drives Sterling to make it the country's leading leisure hospitality brand.



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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	59
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With over 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Vikramjit Oberoi took up the role of Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of EIH Limited in 2015.

VIKRAMJIT SINGH OBEROI

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, EIH Limited

Vikramjit Singh Oberoi is the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of EIH Limited. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Science from Pepperdine University, California, USA and has over 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry.

Oberoi joined the Board as a Non-Executive Director on 15th December, 1993. He ecame a Whole-time-Time Director and was designated Deputy Managing Director in July 2004.

In July 2007, he was re-designated as Joint Managing Director of the Company. On November 29th, 2010, he was re-designated Chief Operating Officer and Joint Managing Director of EIH Limited, and took up the role of Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer on April 1st, 2015.



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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	60
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Vishal Vithal Kamat has driven the growth of Orchid Hotels across several states, while adhering to the ethos of environmentally sustainable hospitality and societal empowerment

1

VISHAL VITHAL KAMAT

Executive Director,
Kamat Hotels India Ltd



Vishal Kamat has been taking forward his father, Dr Vithal Kamat's vision while building upon the 85-year legacy of his grandfather, the late Shri Venkatesh Kamat. The family's journey, beginning with the humble roots of simple yet affordable Kamat South Indian restaurants, has evolved into iconic dining establishments like Samrat and Status, culminating in the creation of Asia's first 5-star ecotel hotel, The Orchid Mumbai, among other achievements.

Complementing this pinnacle of luxury are ventures like Fort JadhavGadh, Maharashtra's only fort heritage hotel. Their newest brand, IRA by Orchid Hotels, has been extremely well received across UP, Maharashtra, Odisha, while Toyam by Orchid has made its mark in the wellness space.

Kamat has driven the growth of Orchid Hotels across Odisha, Gujarat, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Maharashtra, while adhering to the ethos of environmentally sustainable hospitality and societal empowerment.

In addition to his professional pursuits, he is deeply committed to social responsibility and community empowerment, driving initiatives that uplift local businesses, artisans, safeguard cultural legacies, and advocate for sustainable tourism. His commitment to giving back is exemplified through the IRA brand, which allocates 1% of its earnings towards girls' education, showcasing his dedication to societal progress.

An active leader in the hospitality industry, Kamat currently serves as the Chairman of Maharashtra, CII, a role he enjoys as it gives him a broader view of businesses across industries and states, allowing him to contribute to nation-building, not just business growth.

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Under Zaid Sadiq's able leadership, the Prestige group is in the process of aggressive expansion in the hospitality space with tie-ups with reputed international brands.



1

ZAID SADIQ

Executive Director,
Liaison and Hospitality, Prestige Group

Zaid Sadiq joined the Prestige Group in January 2007, and was appointed Executive Director, Liaison & Hospitality in October 2009. He holds a BA (Hons) degree in Hospitality Management and a Master's in Business Management Administration (Thames Valley University, UK), apart from a Hospitality Management Diploma (American Hotel and Lodging Association) from the London Hotel School.

With over 14 years of experience in the hospitality sector, he is actively involved in the public relations affairs of the company including liaising and hospitality. He also plays a key role in building strong relations with external and internal customers, and oversees the critical task of building a suitable image and reputation for the company.

In addition, he is currently heading the hospitality vertical of the Prestige Group. Under his able leadership, the company is in the process of aggressive expansion in the hospitality space with tie-ups with reputed international brands like Conrad Bengaluru, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Centre in Prestige Shantiniketan, The Artiste Kochi, Mulberry Shades Bengaluru Nandi Hills - A Tribute Portfolio Resort, JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa and Moxy Bengaluru Airport Prestige Tech Cloud.

Sadiq likes travelling and exploring new ideas and is an avid reader.

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Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	62
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Zubin Saxena leads a team of over 3,500 team members across 26 hotels, steering growth and enhancing the Hilton brand presence in 15 Indian cities.

ZUBIN SAXENA

Senior Vice President & Regional Head, Hilton - South Asia

A seasoned veteran with over two decades of experience in the global and Indian hospitality industry, Zubin Saxena currently serves as the Senior Vice President & Regional Head, South Asia for Hilton. In this pivotal role, based at the Hilton corporate headquarters in Gurgaon, he leads a team of over 3,500 team members across 26 hotels, steering growth and enhancing the Hilton brand presence in 15 Indian cities.

An alumnus of the University of Glasgow, Saxena holds a master's degree in business administration. He has carved a distinguished career with leading brands, notably serving as the Managing Director and Area Senior Vice President at Radisson Hotel Group for eight successful years, showcasing consistent leadership excellence. His journey also features pivotal roles at InterContinental Hotels Group, Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels, and HVS, where he demonstrated expertise in strategic development, operations, and advisory capacities.

Commencing as a Management Trainee in 1999, his career trajectory spans the foundational stages to executive leadership, underscoring his exceptional leadership, strategic foresight, and profound understanding of the industry's dynamics.

On Hilton India been recognized – for the second consecutive year – as India's No.1 company to work for by 'Great Place to Work', the renowned global research and consulting firm, Saxena noted that the honour embodied Hilton's dedication to fostering a work environment that instils pride and fosters meaningful connections for team members, showcasing Hilton's focus in their culture framework.