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18 EVENT ROUNDUP

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HICSA 2024: Record attendance marks Hospitality Industry's recovery and innovation

Hbi Staff | Bengaluru

Hotelivate hosted the 19th Edition of its Hotel Investment Conference – South Asia (HICSA) at the JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa on 2 – 4 April 2024. This annual event is India's largest hospitality investment conference and this year it saw over 725 delegates in attendance representing various businesses across the hospitality spectrum which indicated a turning point in the industry's recovery.

The theme this year was "Savouring South Asia: Innovations in Food, Tech, and Design" which focused on the food and beverage sector and all the innovations and possibilities around it. This industry event united leaders, visionaries, and influencers from the hospitality and investment sectors for an immersive exploration of the region's rich culinary heritage, technological advancements, and cutting-edge design trends.

This year, HICSA saw the presence of three Global CEOs as speakers for this conference. Sébastien Bazin – Chairman & CEO – Accor, Mark S. Hoptamajian – President & CEO – Hyatt Hotels Corporation and Federico J. González – Executive Vice-Chairman – Radisson Hotel Group and CEO – Louvre Hotels Group.

This year's highlight was also the Culinary Carnival which brought together talented chefs, artisanal food vendors, and passionate hoteliers



on Wednesday, 03rd April 2024 at the JW Marriott Bengaluru Golfshire Resort and Spa.

At the Culinary Carnival, there was a diverse and mouth-watering array of dishes from some of the most famous restaurants across India. From street food classics to gourmet delicacies, there was something for every palate. This flavorful adventure was open for all for dinner, as a part of the conference main agenda and received very good feedback. The participating restaurants were – Le Cirque – The Leela Hotels Resorts & Palaces, Glass Kitchen & Bar – IHG, Thai Soul – Hyatt, East – Marriott International, Dum Pukht – ITC Hotels, Farzi Café – Massive Restaurants and Inja – Atelier House Hospitality. The celebrations partners were Paul John Distilleries.

Commenting on the 19th anniversary of HICSA, Manav Thadani, Founder Chairman of Hotelivate said "This year has been truly exceptional, with attendees showing remarkable morale and spirit, and the numbers speak for themselves! We were thrilled to host numerous global CEOs as speakers at HICSA, making it an event of global significance and impact. All the sessions were extremely well received in terms of attendance as well as content. We are extremely grateful for the support we have received from our delegates, speakers and sponsors for both the conference as well the culinary carnival. None of this would have been possible without them".

A collection of presentations, keynotes, interviews and panel discussions covered a plethora of themes and topics as industry stalwarts addressed the changes that hospitality is facing in the recovery phase of the industry and highlighted the growth potential and investment opportunities going forward. HICSA 2024 was spread over a span of three days and aimed to delve into the multifaceted dimensions of South Asian hospitality, spotlighting the intersection of food, technology, and design within the industry. The conference featured an array of engaging sessions, keynote presentations, panel discussions, and interactive workshops led by esteemed industry experts and thought leaders.

Some of the key highlights of the event apart from the thought-provoking sessions were Kapil Bhatia, Executive Chairman, Interglobe Enterprises who was felicitated with a Lifetime Achievement Award,

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celebrating a professional journey like no other. He was seen attending the event with his grandson. The 'HICSA Hotels of the Year Awards' presented by MakeMyTrip, recognizes the most remarkable new hotel developments in the South Asian region and as usual saw a great number of nominations. The awards have over the past ten years grown from strength-to-strength and now encompass a wide range of accommodation products across the lodging industry. Since its inception, more than 500 hotels have been nominated in various categories.

The winner of the Critics' Choice Award for Leisure was Ahu Bay, Sri Lanka and for the Urban was Greenpark Bengaluru. The winners across the other six categories were: JW Marriott Goa in the Luxury/Upper Upscale Hotel Segment; Storiï by ITC Hotels Moira Riviera, Goa for the Boutique Hotels segment; Greenpark Bengaluru in the Upscale Hotel Segment; Novotel Mumbai International Airport in the Upper Mid-Market Segment; Ginger Mumbai Airport in the Mid-Market Segment and Ibis Styles Goa Vagator in the Budget/Economy Segment.

The General Manager of the Year Awards, presented by MakeMyTrip was another highlight this year. These awards used to be a part of the Hotel Operations Summit India (HOSI) and while that conference took a hiatus in 2023, our commitment to celebrating excellence in the hospitality industry remains steadfast. The prestigious GM of the Year Awards were seamlessly integrated into the Hotel Investment Conference South Asia (HICSA) as the closing event of the main conference on Thursday, 04th April 2024. These awards are a wonderful opportunity to recognize and highlight the hard work and outstanding performance



displayed by the General Managers untiringly running the show. The Jury Special Recognition Award went to Satyajeeet Krishnan – Taj Mahal, New Delhi. For the Budget Category of hotels, the winner was Tarun Singh – Country Inn & Suites by Radisson Manipal, for the Mid-Market/Upper Mid-Market segment – the winner was Arjun Kaggallu – Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences, in the Upscale / Upper Upscale category, there were two winners with the exact same score: Sanjay Pandita – Aurika, Coorg – Luxury by Lemon Tree Hotels and Rajneesh Kumar – Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort, and for the Luxury Category, the winner was George Bennet Kuruvilla – The Ritz-Carlton Bengaluru.

The conference ultimately concluded with the famous "Hot Seat Debate" moderated by Manav Thadani, which put the spotlight on its panelists, bringing it all out in the open and with this, it brought an end to the most exciting three days. ■

