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*Your Window To The Tech and Startup World*

**Global Destinations**

*A Guide To The World of MICE and Tourism*



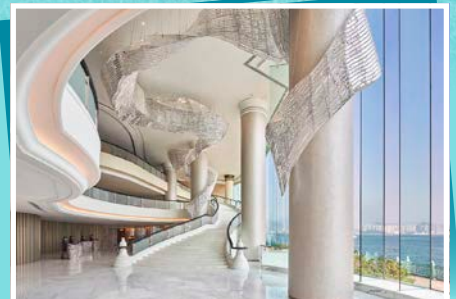
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IFA Berlin 2020



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## Dear Friends

### COVID – 19: Hotels will have to change/adapt

As a journalist many of my industry friends have been asking my views on the future prospects of tourism and hospitality. Some of my thoughts.

- The three interdependent industries tourism, hospitality and aviation will feel the maximum burn out. Massive cancellations of flights, trade shows, MICE and weddings, sightseeing tours, hotel reservations has all made the industry see a huge set back. Add to this the impending worldwide economic recession. The worst part will be massive job losses globally - 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk.
- Digital innovations and technological novelties will drive the industry. All of us including the owners, directors, GMs, sales staff, front desk etc. will have to get used to these terminologies AI, VR/AR, Blockchain.
- Covid 19 has brought forth web and video conferencing tools that have become fundamental to all of us. The staff will have to be trained in the basics of Zoom, Webex, BlueJeans, Skype, Google Hangouts etc. Hotels will have to have the provisions and technical staff to handle tech implementations in the hotel. As free wifi is a necessity, web conferencing facilities will also be a must.
- New technologies that provide the users a touch-less way of exiting a room may be needed to be implemented in existing and for sure in future hotels.
- Paper less menu/digital menu system for restaurants and hotels.
- As people will still hesitate to take trains and planes road trips will drive markets initially and hotels should look into this. Promotion of staycations will have to be a priority.
- While hotels will try to minimize their losses, they will have to invest in marketing and brand building (recall value) in order to attract as many leisure and business guests as possible.
- The chances of seeing 100 + inventory hotels will be remote in future.
- Hotel chains will have to start providing concessions for their franchisees, if they don't want them to exit. Also convincing investors and lenders will be an uphill task.
- Staff will have to learn to use masks, hand gloves and sanitizers when on the job.
- If social distancing has to be maintained the concept of valet parking will have to change.
- Contactless check-in/check-out will become the norm.
- Electronic locks that use Bluetooth and RFID technology or still better access room via smartphone (in certain cases no need to visit the reception).
- Minibars may cease to exist (except in resorts).
- Hand sanitizer dispensers will need to be placed both outside and inside of rooms as well as putting wipes inside the rooms in case the customers want to perform a wipe-down by themselves. Must have amenities at hotels will have to include Covid-19-related provisions.
- Hotels will have to be prepared for the substantial increase in room dining.
- Concept of interior designing will change.
- This may be a bit too farfetched for many but already being implemented in Japan - hotels and restaurants exclusively run by robots.
- 3D food printers may be the future for HoReCa (Hotel/Restaurant/Catering).
- The standard handshake may soon disappear and alternatives like the Indian Namaste or a gesture of hand on the heart or just a nod may become the form greeting.

*Looking at a more optimistic outlook – The itch to travel still remains and people want to travel both domestically and internationally. Quite a few are looking forward to more flexible travel restrictions – and I certainly is one of them, especially after having made 200+ International trips and experienced 800 + hotels, 46 different airlines and most leading expos across 47 countries.*



Chandragupta Amritkar  
Editor  
chandraguptaa@hotmail.com  
editor@globalfeatures.info

Editor - Chandragupta Amritkar, Managing Editor - Varsha, Design - Manoj Durgam  
Contact - Global Features, B-701, Customs Colony, Military Rd, Marol, Andheri(E), Mumbai-400 059, India.  
Phone - 91-22-29252569, Mobile - 9223419060 / 9969935878 e-mail: editor@globalfeatures.info

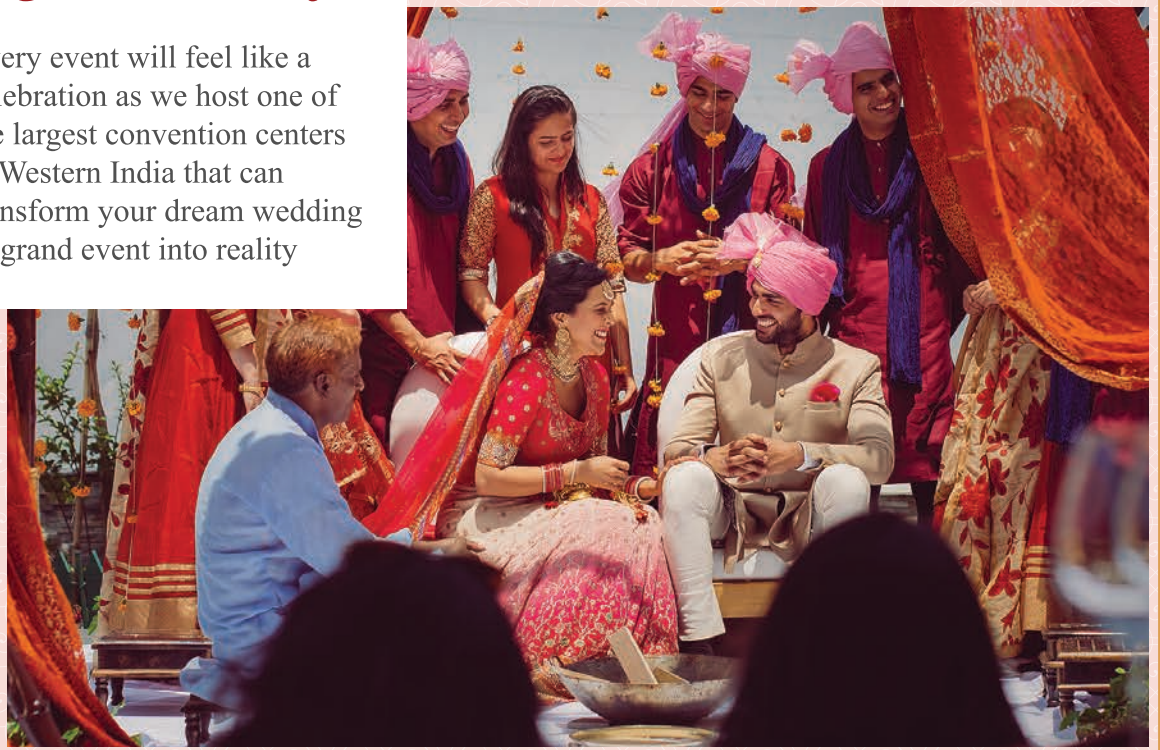
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BY MARRIOTT



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For more information, call : +91.20.6683.3333

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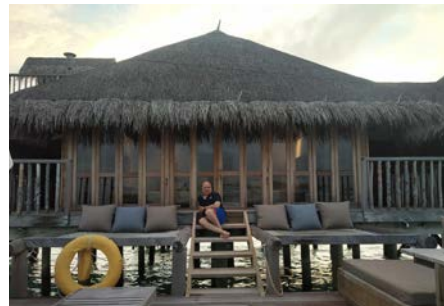


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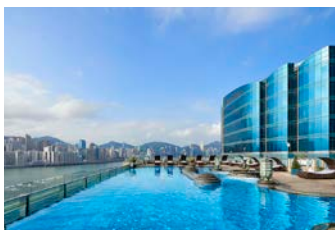
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## Smart City Expo 2020 to go Online

Smart City Expo World Congress (SCEWC) is one of the world's leading event for cities. Held annually in Barcelona it attracts corporate leaders, public representatives, entrepreneurs, experts and academics from all around the globe - to learn from each other, share experiences, talk about best practices, and open new paths for international collaboration. Thanks to COVID-19 the Smart City Expo World Congress is being converted into an online event.

"Since the global pandemic is still impacting our daily lives, the Smart City Expo team and Fira de Barcelona are finding a new way to reconnect all the industry actors and rebuild ecosystems to accelerate a much-needed recovery. This year we are transforming ourselves into an online event: Smart City Live, a one-shot, innovative edition happening digitally on November 17 – 18, 2020, that will maintain the event quality and international scope that we are known for while putting our participants' safety first,"



said Ugo Valenti, Smart City Expo World Congress, Cities & Society Business Unit Director.

The new Smart City Live will consist of a full-day, broadcast television show on day one, with interviews, debates, and success stories focusing on how COVID-19 has impacted cities and is redefining citizens' normality, plus a program on day two featuring workshops, sessions, and side events, which will gather key players and global institutions to tackle the challenges beyond the short-term impact of the pandemic.

"Along with Smart City Live, we will see the kick-off of the first Tomorrow. City initiatives. Our global platform of platforms that combines research, technology, and investment 365 days a year will, in the coming months, launch a capacity-building platform, a radar exploring disruptive technologies, and a podcast series reflecting on the new 'smart' for cities," said Ugo Valenti



Next year Smart City Expo World Congress is scheduled to be back in Barcelona on November 16-18, 2021, to celebrate its 10th edition.

## HKTDC fairs to Go ONLINE

As part of its anti-pandemic measures, the Hong Kong SAR government recently announced that the compulsory 14-day quarantine of persons arriving in Hong Kong from overseas will be extended until 18 September. The extension of this restriction means that overseas exhibitors and buyers will have great difficulty joining the Summer Sourcing Week in July. Following discussions with industry representatives, HKTDC has decided to migrate the physical exhibition to virtual platform, Summer Sourcing Weeks to Go ONLINE, to enable companies to continue



exploring business opportunities.

Despite the global pandemic, sourcing demand is strong and industry players are eager to join the Summer Sourcing Week. The fair has already attracted some 2,000 global exhibitors and more than 10,000 international buyers. We believe that the Summer Sourcing Weeks | Go ONLINE is going to help buyers and suppliers to alleviate business challenges, while the online business matching service will create even more opportunities for participants. Event details will be announced in due course.

The nine shows that will go online from 27 July to 7 August 2020 are

1. HKTDC Hong Kong International Lighting Fair (Spring Edition)
2. HKTDC Hong Kong Electronics Fair (Spring Edition),
3. HKTDC International ICT Expo
4. HKTDC Hong Kong Houseware Fair
5. HKTDC Hong Kong International Home Textiles and Furnishings Fair
6. HKTDC Hong Kong Fashion Week
7. HKTDC Hong Kong Gifts & Premium Fair
8. Hong Kong International Printing & Packaging Fair
9. Hong Kong International Medical and Healthcare Fair

With these nine concurrent fairs, the HKTDC will organise a Summer Sourcing Week from 25 to 28 July. Featuring nine fairs located at the same venue, it will provide a one-stop cross-industry platform for global buyers to replenish their stocks. Additionally, HKTDC is looking into O2O business-matching services at its fairs so that overseas buyers who cannot come to Hong Kong can locate target exhibitors in advance. Video conferences will be arranged between buyers and exhibitors to discuss business deals.



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**Frankfurt Digital Initiative**

Covid-19 has truly hit the world literally bringing it to a “stand still”. Most effected has been our tourism industry. But going tech savvy the dynamic tourism department of Frankfurt has launched Frankfurt Digital Initiative. “As Covid-19 situation persists and travel rustications across the globe we have decided to take the digital route to present the first part of our Frankfurt Digital Initiative. Apart from this on our website we have information about our numerous virtual tours in Frankfurt. The idea is with all these virtual tours we want to make people dream as long as they are not able to travel. And when it opens as we welcome them with open arms they will know what to see,” said Anke Haub,



Manager Tourism Marketing (India), Project Manager Barrier-free Frankfurt, Frankfurt Tourism.

With the help of modern technology Frankfurt’s tourism has been able to bring the colourful scenes of Frankfurt’s famous old town directly to your home using Augmented Reality. The only thing visitors will need is a digital postcard and your smartphone.



Visitors will be able to discover Frankfurt’s “newest” quarter without leaving your home. Through a virtual tour visitors can experience these highlights of the New Frankfurt Old Town from wherever you are: Goldenes Lämmchen, Rotes Haus, Hühnermarkt, Kaiserpfalz Franconofurd, Cathedral.

**JW Marriott Hotel Pune - Ballrooms to reflect “Social Distancing”**

Globally banqueting is going to face huge challenges once COVID-19 pandemic gets under control. Keeping this in view JW Marriott Hotel Pune has taken some great initiatives. "The whole concept of banqueting is going to change as Social Distancing



will be the need of the hour and we will be one of the few hotels well prepared for that. While working in concurrence with the guidelines laid by the local authorities we have reworked on the seating capacity of our meeting rooms and ballrooms to reflect Social Distancing," said Girish Sehgal, General Manager, JW Marriott Hotel Pune. All the MICE venues have been restyled into numerous seating arrangements.

**Meeting Room Setup**

- Cluster Style Seating - 16 Guests,
- Theatre Style Seating - 36 Guests,
- Classroom Style Seating - 12 Guests

**One Part of Ballroom Setup**

- Cluster Style Seating - 48 Guests
- Theater Style Seating - 100 Guests
- Classroom Style Seating - 24 Guests

**Passenger aircraft make room for cargo**

Coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic has already hit the hospitality industry badly and airlines are no exception. Several countries have banned air travel and an estimated 16,000+ passenger jets are grounded worldwide. But in tough times airlines do find solutions. Many airlines are now using their passenger aircraft for cargo flights. Ethiopian Airlines, which grounded many of its international passenger fleet is now using passenger planes for cargo shipments.

“On top of the regular cargo freighter service, using our passenger aircrafts for cargo, we are operating daily out of Mumbai, four times weekly out of New Delhi and two times weekly out of Bangalore, Chennai, Ahmedabad and one weekly from Hyderabad. We are endeavouring to connect India to Africa,



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Europe, US and Canada and the rest of the world, despite the challenges associated with COVID-19 global pandemic,” said Tigist Eshetu, Regional Director, Indian Sub-continent Ethiopian Airlines.

Caro services have been vital for the airline. The first cargo charter operation was launched to Nairobi in 1946 and since then Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services Service has been growing. Today Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services gives scheduled services as well as charter operations depending stretching its wing to Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Currently, Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services operates with the state-of-the-art cargo terminal that has a capacity of 1 million tons per annum and is the largest trans-shipment terminal in Africa. In the strategic road map of Ethiopian - Vision 2025, Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services envisions to be a full-fledged profit center with annual revenue of US\$ 2 Billion, 19 dedicated aircraft, annual tonnage of 820,000 and 57 international destinations.

### Staycation will play a key role to tourism recovery from COVID-19

The best part of a staycation is it supports the local tourism industry (which truly got a raw deal globally and more so in India from the government) and probably will play a key role to tourism recovery from COVID-19.



The worldwide coronavirus pandemic (estimated to have affected 177 countries) and global travel restrictions have brought Staycation (a vacation spent close to home) into focus. Most of us have been self-quarantined for months – add to this the daily chores - from laundry to cleaning, from planning recipes to preparing meals and now it’s time for a vacation. But you can’t travel – so why not look at a nice hotel close to your house, city, town. It would provide a change of scenery for your family and away from the daily chores which will now be the hotels responsibility.

Staycations are a great way to relax and save money as people are looking at options for a break from being in their homes but also a safe place close to home.

But selecting the hotel will be critical so look out for hotels that have adopted

- To the new reality
- Safety protocols

- Introduced new Covid-19 policies
- Social-distancing measures
- Face masks are mandatory
- Digital menus and contactless room service deliveries

### Hotels will have to aim at

- Local residents will have to be persuaded
- Hotels will need to come out with special offers, packages and deals attractive to the residents
- Providing guests peace of mind
- Showcase stringent hygiene and deep cleaning procedures
- Preferably glass partitions at the front desk
- Around 5-10 people in the lobby at any given time (depends on the size of lobby).
- If possible complimentary face masks and gloves in guest rooms.
- Hand sanitizer stations across the property

Another important point is hotels can promote **Suite Staycation** at a reasonable price giving an opportunity to guests who may not afford suites to come and stay with their families – kids/parents

As and when lockdown gets relaxed staycation is bound to boom – the hotels will just have to be prepared.

### UNWTO : Impact of COVID-19 on tourism sector

Recently World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) released new data measuring the impact of COVID-19 on tourism sector as finally tourism is gradually restarting in many countries. UNWTO emphasizes the need for responsibility, safety and security as restrictions on travel are lifted together with the creation of travel corridors, the resumption of international flights. Against this backdrop, UNWTO has reiterated its call for governments and international organizations to support tourism, a lifeline for many millions and a backbone of economies.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “The sudden and massive fall in tourist numbers threatens jobs and economies. It is vital, therefore, that the restart of tourism is made a priority and managed responsibly, protecting the most vulnerable and with health and safety as a the sector’s number one concern. Until tourism’s restart is underway everywhere, UNWTO again calls for strong support for the sector in order to protect jobs and businesses. We therefore welcome the steps undertaken by both the European Union and individual countries including France and Spain to support tourism economically and build the foundations for recovery.”

While April was expected to be one of the busiest times of the year due to the Easter holidays, the near-universal introduction of travel restrictions led to a fall of 97% in international tourist arrivals. This follows a 55% decline in March. Between January and April 2020, international tourist arrivals declined by 44%, translating into a loss of about US\$195 billion in international tourism receipts. At the regional level, Asia and the Pacific was the first to be hit by the pandemic and the worst hit between January and April, with arrivals down 51% in that period. Europe recorded the second-largest fall, with a 44% drop for the same period, followed by the Middle East (-40%), the Americas (-36%) and Africa (-35%).

# World's largest electronics marketplace



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# Since COVID 19, IFA 2020 to be the first major physical tech event



Having been to IFA Global Press conference for a decade and interacted with the brilliant duo - **Dr Christian Göke, CEO of Messe Berlin** and **Jens Heithecker, the Executive Director of IFA Berlin** this strategy to make sure IFA will happen albeit with attendee limits was truly outstanding and I am sure other global trade shows in almost every field will study and try to follow this pattern but naturally with some variations feels **Chandragupta Amritkar**.

Germany has banned any events with more than 5,000 participants from taking place in the country until at least October 24th. That meant most trade shows in Germany had to be canceled and so was IFA – one of the world’s largest tech events for consumer electronics and home appliances. But then during a livestream with the media Jens Heithecker, IFA Executive Director announced that though IFA 2020 physical event was canceled due to the pandemic, the event will still take place physically but with a maximum of just 1,000 attendees to each section of the four stand-alone events per day.

## IFA Berlin reinvents itself for 2020 as a three-day event

IFA has been given the go-ahead to take place in 2020 as a real-life event in Berlin, based on a special concept that puts health and safety first. Taking place over just three days – from 3 to 5 September – this year’s IFA 2020 Special Edition falls well within the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The invite-only event will put strict limits on the number of attendees and focus on IFA’s four global core functions, which are:

1. an innovation showcase for brands;
2. a platform for cutting-edge technologies;
3. a sourcing event for OEMs and ODMs; and
4. a marketplace where retailers and brands can come together.

IFA 2020 will be the first opportunity for the consumer electronics and home appliances industries to present new products and services directly to

media and – by extension – to consumers and trade. The event also comes at a crucial moment for brands, manufacturers and retailers around the world, just ahead of the year’s most important shopping season stretching from Black Friday and Singles Day to Cyber Monday, Christmas and beyond.

Jens Heithecker, the Executive Director of IFA Berlin, said: “After all the event cancellations during the past months, our industry urgently needs a platform where it can showcase its innovation, so that it can recover and rebound. The recovery of our industry starts here at IFA Berlin.” While virtual events were useful, they were “missing the immediacy, hands-on experience and human connections that make events like IFA Berlin so incredibly useful” Heithecker said.

The concept for IFA 2020 was developed in close collaboration with public health authorities in Germany to ensure the health and safety of all participants. The organizers will make sure that social distancing, careful crowd control and other effective public hygiene measures are all in place.

As a result, IFA 2020 will not be open to the public, but run as an invitation-only event.

## Four Events, One IFA

This year’s IFA will effectively be run as four stand-alone events, with not more than 1,000 attendees for each event per day. While the organizers hope that the overall public health situation will improve between now and September, they have decided to err on the side of caution and meet the strictest safety standards possible.



IFA Opening Press Conference 2019 - Jens Heithecker, Executive Vice President Messe Berlin Group, IFA Executive Director; Melinda Crane, Moderator; Miss IFA; Hans-Joachim Kamp, Chairman of the supervisory board gfu Consumer & Home Electronics; Dr. Christian Göke, CEO, Messe Berlin (l.t.r.)

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**The four IFA 2020 events are:**

**IFA Global Press Conference**

IFA has moved its Global Press Conference, which usually takes place in April, to September and turned it into this year’s Global Showcase for Innovation and Technology.

The Global Press Conference will invite around 800 journalists covering 50+ countries to Berlin, so brands and manufacturers will be able to show journalists their latest products and devices. All keynotes and company press conferences will take place on just two or three keynote stages curated by IFA. This keeps the numbers down for the on-site production staff and ensures that the highest hygiene standards are observed both on stage and in the seating area for media. In addition to company press conferences, industry partners will have the chance to create smart company and brand presentations for interviews and further talks with media representatives. For journalists, this will be the most efficient way this year yet to cover the technology stories their audiences are interested in; it’s their first opportunity after the beginning of the pandemic to see all of this year’s innovation and new products all in one place, and they can organize face-to-face interviews with the spokespeople for brands.

The opening keynote for this year’s IFA will be delivered by Cristiano Amon, the President of Qualcomm, a company that is the undisputed global leader in mobile connectivity.



Cristiano Amon

Qualcomm’s president said he is looking forward to giving the keynote and addressing the importance of connectivity during these unprecedented times. He will speak about the company’s latest developments in 5G, AI and other key technologies that will drive the future of the Internet and deliver the devices and capabilities the world needs.



**IFA NEXT meets IFA SHIFT Mobility**

For this year only, IFA will combine its two innovation platforms – IFA Next and SHIFT Mobility – for an exclusive live event for the international tech community. The event will bring together technology start-ups and companies in the connected mobility sector, to help them get the much-needed lifeblood of publicity and industry connections. For innovators, disruptors, tech journalists and digital influencers interested in the cutting edge of technology, this will be the year’s most important event to attend.



**IFA Global Markets**

During the past three years, IFA Global Markets has grown to become Europe’s largest sourcing show for OEMs and ODMs. Now it will be this year’s first dedicated sourcing show in the world. The message from IFA’s industry partners has been clear: the industry needs a sourcing show to repair and restructure its supply chains hit by the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**IFA Business, Retail & Meeting Lounges**

Every year, IFA Berlin is the most important marketplace for consumer electronics and home appliances. In 2019, for example, brands and retailers struck deals worth more than 4.7 billion euro during the event in Berlin.

While the pandemic will make it impossible to replicate this level of deal-making and networking, IFA Berlin will curate the IFA Business, Retail & Meeting Lounges to give brands and manufacturers the much-needed opportunity to meet retailers in a safe and efficient manner ahead of the year’s all-important shopping season.

**Virtual IFA Experience**

The organizers know that interest in attending IFA 2020 will far outstrip the available places, while some people may still be subject to travel restrictions. That’s why IFA will offer everybody virtual opportunities to be part of the IFA Berlin experience.

Hans-Joachim Kamp, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of gfu Consumer & Home Electronics GmbH, the organizer of IFA, said: “IFA Berlin is the most important event for the consumer electronics and home appliances industry. These past few weeks, we have worked very closely with the IFA team to develop a concept that gives all our industry partners the platform they need to talk about their innovations.”

Some of the exhibitors giving their views included Chengdong (Richard) Yu, CEO Huawei, Michael Maier, Fitbit Inc., CEO |





Chengdong (Richard) Yu

Cluster Manager Central Europe and Daniel and Dr. Andreas Sennheiser, Co-CEOs, Sennheiser.

“Huawei has been participating IFA for 9 years. It has been an excellent platform for Huawei to promote our products and strategies as well as meeting friends around the world. We look forward to joining the event in the new form,” said Chengdong (Richard) Yu, CEO Huawei

“A really surprising and inspiring IFA concept at the right time. We are currently examining how we can best use these ideas for Fitbit’s global ambitions. It is more important than ever to provide positive impulses for our industry, media and trade,” said Michael Maier, Fitbit Inc., CEO | Cluster Manager Central Europe.

“IFA has been one of the most important touchpoints for

Sennheiser to engage with our industry family, press and customers for many years. In a time in which exchange of ideas and positive impulses are more important than ever, we are very pleased to see such a creative approach to bring the spirit of IFA to life in 2020. We are currently looking into how we can best leverage these solutions for Sennheiser,” said Daniel and Dr. Andreas Sennheiser, Co-CEOs, Sennheiser.

Dr Christian Göke, CEO of Messe Berlin, commented: “Our IFA team really has pulled out the stops for this one. I’m incredibly proud of how they have tackled this challenge and come up with a solution for IFA 2020.”

***IFA Berlin will be open to invited participants from 3 to 5 September 2020 and will be held at Messe Berlin.***



## CE China: Gears up for September



Consumer Electronics China (CE China), a global IFA event is positioned as one of the most important business shows for consumer electronics and home appliances solutions in China. While COVID is expected to subside by September, the CE China team is proceeding as planned for the event from September, 24 – 26.

At this year’s edition, CE China will welcome new exhibitors like the well-known TV brand Sichuan Changhong Electronics and household appliance manufacturer Whirlpool (China) as well as long time partners like Cuori Electrical Appliances, Guangdong Galanz and Vatti Corporation Limited, just to name a few.

CE China and the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products (CCCME) has

agreed on an in-depth cooperation. The aim is to help exhibitors to create new business opportunities, activate the market after the shutdown due to the outbreak of Covid-19, connecting international markets, promoting international business exchanges and shaping a bigger market for home appliance and consumer electronics in China.

### CE Summit powered by IDG Asia

The International Consumer Electronics Summit (CE Summit) will be hosted by the Guangzhou Municipal Government and International Data (Asia) Group (IDG Asia) and is part of the CE China program. The CE Summit is a conference where new ideas, concepts, technologies and products are shared in order to push the consumer electronics industry more globally.



***CE China is scheduled to be held from 24 – 26 September 2020 in Guangzhou at Poly World Trade Center Expo***

## “I hope that in a post-COVID-19 era, we will become more sensitive to nature’s innovations”

There’s no two doubts that our biodiversity is in danger as global warming is taking precedence. A few from our hospitality industry have a passion for sustainability and a prominent figure is **Sonu Shivdasani, Founder and CEO, Soneva**. A British with Indian roots is considered to be a pioneer in environmentally friendly resorts that also remain faithful to luxury. His article focuses on COVID – 19 & Environmental issues – Impact on Hospitality Industry.

I have been fortunate enough to experience many crises during my lifetime. My choice of the word ‘fortunate’ is deliberate. The Chinese word for crisis is two characters: ‘danger’ and ‘opportunity’. According to Lao Tzu, the Chinese writer and philosopher, ‘good fortune has its roots in disaster.’ Over the years, I have come to understand these words and have realised that these crises are opportunities to learn, grow and develop. I have realised that if we consider a crisis in a positive way, we can always find an opportunity to learn and develop and make our lives more enriching as a result.

Current crisis has allowed many people the opportunity to pause and rethink their values and importantly their priorities. I believe that only through introspection can we shape a better, new reality post-Covid-19. In a post-COVID-19 world, consumers will be more conscious of the impact that they will have on both nature and the communities which they visit. I have to specifically mention air travel, which, while it is a big part of an individual’s ecological footprint, is a very small contributor to greenhouse gases, and its contribution is less than the negative impact of the beef and dairy industry.

It is important to remember, while the current global health emergency will end, unfortunately, this hopeful scenario will not be the case with global warming. It is an ongoing situation which will affect each and every one of us. And it highlights our interconnectedness.

Climate experts believe that we are near a tipping point of no return. Some believe we have already passed it. We already have 400 parts per million of CO2 in the atmosphere. Even if we reduced our carbon emissions considerably and followed the

targets established in Paris in 2016, we will still hit 500 parts per million. Even if we were to slam on the brakes and turn around, we would not be able to because nature itself would continue the global warming process as a result of feedback

loops, such as methane escaping from below the Arctic and the Antarctic, less reflection from glaciers that have disappeared, warmer seas emitting CO2 rather than absorbing them and so on.

I hope that in a post-COVID-19 era, we will become more sensitive to nature’s innovations. We will try to work in harmony with nature rather than try to battle it. It’s my opinion that this terrible virus came about because we ignored nature’s laws and I believe that now the hospitality industry will focus more on a natural, unique experience that contributes to the environment. It is also encouraging to see that many of the major hotel companies have now started to take the path that Soneva did in 2008 and eliminate single-use plastic in their properties including, most importantly, plastic water bottles.

I suspect, that even though the second quarter of 2020 may be the period of the greatest economic decline in history; I think consumers will be prepared to spend that little bit extra for a unique experience as they will value the precious time with their families more now than ever.

As we recover and journey out of this crisis, we will reach a fork in the road. I do hope that we will clearly know where we want to go. The current global pandemic has highlighted how interconnected we are, and how important it is that as humans on planet earth, we break through our national boundaries and collaborate together to preserve life on earth as we know it.

If we do not change, and just go back to business as usual after this crisis, it will be a sad, lost opportunity. All the suffering that we have been through over these past months will have been for nothing. This pandemic will end but the important question is whether, the bond we have with the way we live and our daily reality has been sufficiently broken, and whether we can attach ourselves to a new reality and a new way of doing things; or if we will just go back to our old ways.



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## Ajmer: Worth a visit



Ajmer and Pushkar are not only for pilgrimage site for Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims but also renowned for some of the oldest geological structures in India. So when my dear friend Jaydeep Bhat, AVP, Gupta Prime Resorts Pvt Ltd invited me and my spouse to visit his beautiful twin properties - Grand Xenia and Paradizzo Resort we felt it a good idea (this was just a week before lockdown).

Landing at Jaipur airport (the nearest airport from Ajmer) late evening, the hotel vehicle was there to pick us up. It took us nearly 3 hours (125 kilometres) to reach Paradizzo Resort. Check-in was quick and we were allotted a nice suite. eco-friendly Resort with, unpolluted environs which help to rejuvenate body, mind and soul. The quiet poolside promises a breath taking view. Though the resort has only 40 rooms including 3 suites what attracted me was the lush green lawns making it an ideal MICE and wedding destination. "Thanks to the vast space we can accommodate large events be it seminars, conferences, gala dinners, wedding receptions. If it's a large event and more rooms are required we have another hotel that can accommodate additional 100 people. The Poolside Barbeque is another attraction that offers a romantic setting for dining and barbeques," said Jaydeep Bhat. During our stay we had the pleasure of experiencing a romantic poolside dinner at Paradizzo Resort.

We also stayed at Grand Xenia, Ajmer's first Banquet Hotel, for two nights. Its quite a modern hotel with an aura of opulence. The hotel has 3 Exclusive Suites (worth experiencing) and 60 spacious guestrooms with good banqueting space.

Ajmer is one of India's heritage cities and has the world famous Pushkar, Ajmer Sharif Dargah, Sand dunes and Anna Sagar Lake but not promoted extensively. Seeing an opportunity to promote not just his hotels but also the city, destination dinning, hi-tea by the lake etc Jaydeep has introduced various packages. We did have the pleasure of having hi-tea by the lake with the chefs.

**Pushkar** - Pushkar, situated about 10 km from Ajmer is a pilgrimage site for Hindus and Sikhs. Located on the shore of Pushkar Lake - Semi-circular in shape and about 8-10 metres deep, is surrounded by 52 bathing ghats and over 400 temples and is truly a magnificent sight to behold. The most famous among Pushkar temples is the Brahma Temple (the only Brahma temple in the world). Legend has it that this lake was consecrated to Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe when a lotus dropped from his



hand into the vale and a lake emerged in that place. No pilgrimage is considered to be complete without a dip in the holy Pushkar Lake. The city is also significant for its Gurdwaras dedicated to Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. Pushkar is famous for its annual Pushkar Camel Fair. Held over seven days mostly in November it attracts nearly 200,000 people.

**Ajmer Dargah** - The Ajmer Sharif Dargah is considered to be among the holiest Muslim shrines in India. We were shown around by Khwaja Moin-ud-din Chishti, the Sufi saint from Persia is enshrined here who is believed to be the descendant of Muhammad, and it is on his request that he came to India. In keeping with his secular teachings, its doors are open to people of all faiths and religions. The shrine was built by Mughal King Humayun in honour of this saint. Made of marble and gold plating, the actual tomb is guarded by a silver railing and a marble screen. It is believed that if you pray for anything with a pure heart it is bound to be fulfilled. There is a sense of peace and serenity inside the premises of dargah with so many beautiful flowers and burning incense sticks.

It's difficult to take own vehicle there as the approach road is very narrow. If you visit first time then don't forget to take your hanky for covering your head. The place is quite crowded and if you are a family do try to stay together. Jaydeep had connected us to Faizan Bhai, one of the descendants of the family, who not only showed us around but also assisted us in getting to the main worship area where we had a very good Darshan.

Other places not to miss out are Anasagar Lake, Lake Foy Sagar, Prithviraj Smarak, Taragarh Fort, Nasiyan Temple, Chamunda Mata Temple, Nareili Jain Temple and The Ajmer Jain temple, also known as Soniji Ki Nasiyan or Swarna Nagari or City of Gold.



## “We have introduced an Absolute Care program”

To get an insight into how Grand Xenia is handling the COVID-19 situation we did an e-interview with **Jaydeep Bhat, AVP, Gupta Prime Resorts Pvt Ltd.** Excerpts

### How do you view the current COVID-19 situation?

COVID-19 has affected every sector across the globe, and the hotel industry is among the hardest hit - a pandemic never experienced before. These times will be challenging, but it will be imperative that we stand united, as an industry working towards the future. We want to assure our guests those who are travelling



during this pandemic time that their safety and comfort remain our highest priority and we are always there to take special care of them.

At Grand Xenia, we have always practised being open and transparent with our guests and colleagues. We have always placed the highest emphasis on the safety and wellbeing of our guests with exacting standards of cleanliness and hygiene. With the

risks associated with COVID-19, and in keeping with WHO and MoT guidelines, we have implemented a number of additional measures.

### How will you ensure a safe experience for the guests?

We have introduced an Absolute Care program which encapsulates every minor detail within our operating standards to ensure that we are looking at the safety and security of our guests and associates and covering every single element /touch point in our protocols. This is our promise to our customers as they feel comfortable to engage with us again.

We are strictly following government advisories and guidelines on hygiene and cleanliness. We are conducting awareness sessions on COVID-19 for the entire staff and organizing regular training sessions for our housekeeping staff to follow high standard hygiene protocols. Our staff is taking the utmost care with regards to handling of food / bed n bath linen / common area sanitization / garbage disposal as per latest guidance and hygiene protocols, we assure you that they are well trained to handle situations that may occur at any of our hotels and we have confidence in their abilities.

### Post COVID-19 would you focus on staycations?

Absolutely. We have already tied up with large online platforms for booking tours and other activities and experiences, as selling experiences will be key to success, creating compelling stories on blogs and social media of Ajmer and Rajasthan would encourage guests to travel back to Rajasthan.

### How about MICE?

The ongoing lockdown in the country and pause in all domestic and international travel has impacted all segments -- domestic, inbound and outbound; and all verticals - leisure, MICE, heritage, adventure and niche. We have adapted below practices to handle MICE/ Wedding Segment. These are - Limit attendees (1 person per 2 square-meter space; Body temperature screening (use of a track and trace app); Distancing practice at the MICE venues, elevators, restrooms, restaurants and canteens; An efficient tracking system in case a delegate becomes ill after visiting the venue; Queuing system with the separation of waiting areas before entering the venue.



Jaydeep Bhat

### F&B is vital. How do you take care of the gastronomy of your guests?

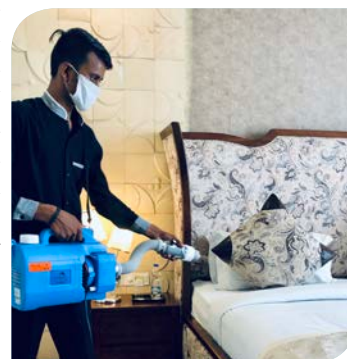
Food will never go out of fashion and the future trends in the food segment are going to be experimental. During lockdown our food production team was busy experimenting new fusion food, we are coming up with new food menus which offer a modern touch on Indian cuisine through the use of molecular gastronomy. We have introduced destination dining experiences in our staycation packages like dinner at the sand dunes with Rajasthani folk dance, tea at the lakeside,

### Any philanthropic spirit from the group?

We have not just supported our own team and their families but also reached out to various government bodies to provide shelter or quarantine facilities for frontline Covid-19 warriors by offering free stays and meals. Our group properties have become the new shelter for frontline health workers who are risking their lives to keep us safe.

### On a personal front why have you chosen to pursue a career in the hotel industry?

The hospitality industry allows you to develop yourself – professionally and also as a person. Not only do you improve on the professional skills you already possess, but with time and commitment you learn others due to the variety of colleagues, clients and situations that will put you to the test. I enjoy interaction with my guest and also like the satisfaction that comes after helping them solve a problem. It is a worthwhile reward to me as a service provider.





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## Over-water luxury @ Gili Lankanfushi



“No News, No Shoes” barefoot luxury is what one can experience at one of the world's best resort says **Chandragupta Amritkar** after spending four mesmerizing days at this heavenly abode

My favourite resort in Maldives is Gili Lankanfushi. So during ITB, Berlin 2019, when my dear friend Michael Chua, VP Sales and Marketing, HPL Hotels & Resorts informed that a fire broke out at Gili Lankanfushi and literally destroyed the resort, I felt sad (Having visited the resort in 2012 I have categorised it among the top 3 must visits of the 800+ hotels that have hosted me across 47 countries). Michael Chua further said, it would be a pleasure to host you as one of the first few journalists once the resort reopens. I felt humbled as well as elated. HPL Hotels & Resorts owns Gili Lankanfushi as well as 11 hotels and resorts and personally one of my favoured groups. Co-ordinating with Angeline Loh, Director of Marketing Communications at HPL Hotels & Resorts in July we narrowed down on dates in December 1st week and relevant flights (being star alliance gold member, I preferred Air India).





Landing at Male airport I was received by the Gili team and taken down to the jetty. As they were expecting another guest (turned out to be an elderly couple from Germany who were visiting the resort for the 4th time). The resort has its own fleet of luxury speedboats that brought us to Gili in 25 minutes. When they collected our shoes on the boat, I recalled their concept of “No News, No Shoes” barefoot luxury at the resort. He hands me a bag to put them in - on the side is printed: “No Shoes. No News.”

On arrival at the resort's jetty the resort team, including the GM - David Stepetic, the MarCom Manager- Tammy Gan, Mr Friday were there to greet me. I was surprised to see Michael Chua also. “I stayed back just to meet and catch up with you,” said Michael Chua bringing a smile on my face. After introductions and a bit of chit chat Mr Friday (personal butlers provided for each villa) took me in a boat to my villa..

### The water villas

Gili has 45 rustic-chic thatched villas with a mix of some connected to wooden jetties, which thread out from the tiny island and some that are stand alone in the sea. The rustic-chic design that is inspired by the resort's natural surroundings that was there 7 years back still existed. All the villas are located overwater and offer open-air living spaces, roof terraces and private decks with direct access to the sea and rooms with glass floor panels offering a glimpse of the corals blooming below. There are nine villa categories namely - The Private Reserve, Family Villa with Pool, Family Villa, Gili Lagoon Residence, Crusoe Residence, Residence with Pool, Residence, Gili Lagoon Villa and Villa Suite.

They provided me with a villa in Crusoe Residences, these are seven standalone water villas of 2700 sqft each, in a crescent format. These are in isolation (giving privacy) and require a small boat for transportation (you need to call Mr Friday for both pick up or drop). The villa is quite impressive - spread across two floors with a master bedroom, a huge living room which can be a nice



party place for 8-10 people (can also be converted into a second bedroom), spacious semi open-air bathroom and the best part was the private rooftop terrace with a daybed and if you want you can do star gazing at night. It was too windy and a bit rainy so I did not venture into this activity. Also these Crusoe Residences have their own private hammocks in front of the villa. Family villas are also quite popular. Measuring 3800 sqft they have two bedrooms and an outdoor jacuzzi with its own kitchenette.

### Cuisine

In the evening I caught up with Michael Chua over a nice vegetarian dinner at Kashiveli prepared by chef Hari. Located directly on the beach Kashiveli, which translates as ‘coral sands’ in the local Dhivehi language, is open for breakfast and dinner. The breakfast spread is amazing with a wide variety of fresh tropical fruits, an array of smoothies, health juices and other normal breakfast items including eggs, breads, pastries etc.

Michael mentioned that for the first time the resort had an Indian executive chef and he is good. I had to admit as the dishes were tasty. The chef then said in the morning he will have steaming hot idlis (a famous breakfast dish from India) for breakfast. I literally landed up having them on all the days along with other items in the buffet.

## Interaction with Executive Chef Hari Govindaraj

The continued success of any hotel/resort rests on two major pillars – service and food. While many hotels are able to bring their service on par but getting a good chef who not only has a passion for culinary arts but also pays close attention to detail is not easy. This is what I noticed in Gilis Executive Chef Hari Govindaraj. “At the age of 15 I started my education into culinary arts. My first job was in a Taj hotel in Bangalore as a soup chef. In 2007 from India I came to Gili and since then I have been here gaining exposure and experience with numerous top chefs including Michelin chefs.”



Harinath Govindaraj

As he took me on a tour of the organic garden, he explained the numerous herbs and vegetables. “We have our own organic garden and this helps us provide fresh

salads, freshly cooked vegetarian dishes. We have a lot of vegan dishes in the menu. We offer guests one-on-one classes to learn the art of cooking with seasonal produce, providing hand-written recipes for guests to take home as a memory of their stay Plans to expand the garden are there and fortunately I have full support of the GM. In future we will be adding more vegetarian dishes to the menu,” said chef Hari.

I had a great time with the chef and really loved his super foods, ice creams and the yummy chocolates.



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The Overwater Bar overlooking the calm waters of Gili Lagoon is the resorts all day dining venue with lunch being the most prevalent. Lunchtimes see the open kitchen cooking up a concise and daily- changing trio of dishes, whilst a lighter option comes in the form of an extensive salad bar. The most popular are chef Hari's super bowls – which I tried and truly relished. In the evenings Overwater Bar becomes the perfect setting for sundowners with delicious cocktails freshly crafted using local flavours and served with light and flavoursome canapes.



Four evenings per week the beach and overwater bar are transformed with a buzzing market experience, with the Asian Street Market, Mediterranean Spice Souk, Passage to India and Maldivian Seafood Grill nights.

By the Sea which is open five nights a week offers Japanese fusion dishes using locally-sourced seafood and reef fish. Guests can enjoy authentic sushi, sashimi, teppanyaki and more. The extensive sake selection brings together only the highest quality sakes from across Japan.

#### Underground wine cellar

When visiting the famous underground wine cellar, I was curious to see if the famed huge piece of a tree trunk that was once swept ashore after the 2004 tsunami still existed as the main table. It was there and I suddenly felt homely. There was a lovely couple from USA who were relishing wine and cheese and while talking to them they said they had saved for 4 years to come and visit



Gili, as they had heard it's one of the best resorts in the world. The cellar is home to a wide range of wines from around the world and knowledgeable sommeliers will enlighten guests about the 500+ varieties of wine.

#### Spa and other activities

The Meera Spa is also overwater with treatment rooms featuring glass floors (I enjoyed the spa treatment while watching the fishes before going into a slumber). The spa section has steam room, sauna and dedicated relaxation terraces on the second floor. The relaxation area is peaceful and you can watch the waves. They have introduced a holistic healing - a five-night programme for those seeking a soulful spa experience.

They have a Jungle Cinema where movies are shown along with popcorn. I liked the small library with a collection of books mainly in English,



German and Chinese/Japanese. Dive & Discover is a five-night programme for budding divers with a passion for marine conservation. They also have guided snorkeling, a sunset dolphin cruise, sunset Champagne and canapés at the castaway platform, private destination dining at One Palm Island etc.

## Largest overwater villa in the world: Gili Lankanfushi's Private Reserve



"Its so spacious that it would be ideal for Indian or Arab families, a group of friends especially with reunions being the norm, a small wedding/get together, a corporate/directors meeting, a CEO get together or even the royals and their events," said David Stepetic.

From my villa I would clearly see this huge structure. "When it's ready it will be the world's largest overwater villa. We call it Gili Lankanfushi's Private Reserve and will be spread over 18,500 sqft. On your next visit it will be a pleasure to host you here," said Tammy Gan.

Located 500 metres from the main resort, Gili Lankanfushi's Private Reserve is sprawled across multi-tiered levels and can be considered an island itself. Comprising five vast buildings, linked by open-air walkways, the Private Reserve offers four bedrooms with spectacular lagoon views. It has a living room including a workstation equipped with a laptop and printer, an infinity pool on upper sun deck, spacious sun decks, two outdoor dining pavilion, couple's spa pavilion with a sauna and steam room, a gymnasium, cinema, bar and finally a water slide that runs from the Private Reserve's top deck into the sea.

## “We always had an eco-friendly approach and commitment to sustainability”

I had the pleasure to spend a couple of hours with the **dynamic GM, David Stepetic of Gili Lankanfushi**. It was lively and lovely conversing with him as he talked passionately about the resort and his dedication towards sustainability.

### The fire must have been a great setback.

Yes. It was devastating. Certainly one of the worst days in my life. The fire occurred at around 11pm and in a matter of few minutes seven over-water villas plus one restaurant were destroyed. My staff was able to safely evacuate all guests from their villas without any untoward incident. Till 7am I, my team along with firefighters from the Maldives National Defence Force worked in tandem to contain the fire. My team also made sure guests were provided alternative accommodation in other resorts and I have to thank my fellow GMs from these resorts.

### So your team played a vital role?

Absolutely. Infact you would be surprised to know that inspite of the resort being shut to guests for almost 11 months we hardly had any attrition rate. HPL management team had 100% confidence in me and we paid our staff during this period. It was an ethical decision. The staff helped us rebuild the resort and today you find it, I am sure, as amazing as it was before.



### Have you been able to maintain the resorts commitment to sustainability?

Sustainability is involved in every decision we make on the island. We always had an eco-friendly approach and commitment to sustainability. Even during renovation we have maintained our rustic-chic aesthetic and use of sustainable materials for the resort's construction. Our Marine conservation effort is much appreciated and welcome our guests to meet the marine biology team and participate in various activities. We try to use eco-friendly amenities and products and you may have noticed our policy - banning of all plastic. Add to this our large organic garden which produces much of the island's herbs, salads and vegetables.

An advanced rocket composter can process up to 100% of the resort's food waste, producing compost which in turn nurtures the island's extensive organic herb garden. I can proudly say we remain a sustainable paradise for the barefoot luxury traveler.

### Gili has already created a niche for itself. How do you plan to bounce back?

We are certainly among the top 5 hotels in the world (TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Awards). With a new design concept inspired by the island's natural surroundings for a calming effect and new guest experiences + numerous wellness programmes we are sure guests will feel attracted. Our guests are encouraged to make themselves at home on the island and we in turn help our guests to make wonderful memories that last a lifetime.

### What about MICE and weddings?

Though we can't hold huge conferences or large weddings, it can be a nice location for top CEO conclave or director meetings. We are situated within one of the Maldives' largest natural lagoons and close to the airport is one of our biggest plus points. We are already a popular honeymoon destination and have had some good weddings but would truly look forward to host a nice Indian wedding.



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## A Thali: Food for the soul, anytime

As a kid I always relished good food that tingled my taste buds and over the years I felt it should be an experience and not just eating for the sake of it. This made me take a keen interest in global cuisine. Over the years I have tried to focus on not just the taste but also on a proper mix of nourishment.

While I have many favourites from Indian and western cuisine, I was always intrigued with Maharashtrian cuisine especially after having feasted on some of the popular dishes and seen innumerable drool worthy pictures of Pav Bhaji Missal Pav, Puran Poli, Vada Pav, Poha etc.

So when we recently relocated to Pune from Dubai, I was excited at the thought of finally getting to taste the authentic flavours of this cuisine at its birthplace. Thus began my love affair with Marathi food.

To begin with, I always imagined that this cuisine was spicy, and delicious, in a street food kind of way. Which to be honest it is. The locals love snacking and there is an array of options readily available.

I however was pleasantly surprised when I slowly started to discover, that the real food that is cooked in the homes of locals here, is infact extremely healthy. Although words like Vegan and Gluten free came to our knowledge quite recently, and borrowed from West, this cuisine is almost entirely based on these principles. The flatbreads (bhakri) are made with millets, which of course are grown in nearby farms, making sense that it's part of their menu. There is a variety of vegetarian options that use peanuts, coconut and sesame oil, making them just the most perfect ingredients for an extremely healthy yet flavorful diet.

The more I have delved into the nuances and intricacies of Maharashtrian cuisine, I have been to discover that my 'quinoa' loving mind actually had a change of heart and fell head over heels in love with the simplest yet the most exciting symphony of

ingredients and flavours available here. This experience has been eye opening for me.

I recently created this vegan, gluten free thali using local ingredients and recipes and what a delicious vibrant feast it was for us all. As my husband after having the thali said - Truly "Food for the Soul".

### On the plate from left:

*Red Chilly Thecha/ Chutney, Sol Kadhi/ Kokum and Coconut Curry (Served Chilled), Mungachi Usal/ Sprouted Mung Bean Curry, Bhareli Vangi / Stuffed Eggplant Curry, Pithla/ Chickpea Flour Curry, Jowar Bhakri/ Millet Flatbread and Rice.*



Surabhi Sehgal

*Surabhi Sehgal, a renowned food stylist and recipe developer, who recently moved to Pune and fell in love with the city and Maharashtrian culture and food contributes for the first time to our gastronomy section. And we look forward to many more such contributions.*

## Now a vegan pork

The havoc created by Covid 19 has made many people move towards becoming vegetarian. Food tech has gained significance as a vital piece of resilience tech. Along with fellow industry leaders from McPherson Strategies, Freight Farms, IBM, and Soft Robotics, Impossible Foods is creating waves with its vegan foods.

"Food is the ultimate technology: digestible tech," says Rachel Konrad, chief communications officer at Impossible Foods, the creator of fully plant-based meat and dairy products that aim to give consumers the taste and benefits of meat and dairy with a much smaller environmental footprint. "It is the marriage of science and nature, and that is what technology is all about."

Consumers are, now more than ever, invested in having a clear understanding of what they eat, and Impossible Foods offers consumers full transparency of the ingredients. Their Impossible Burger 2.0 has already captivated the attention of many foodies, they recently launched a plant-based pork replacement called Impossible Pork.

Impossible Foods aim to give consumers the taste and benefits of meat and dairy with a much smaller environmental footprint, is redefining the notion of technology.



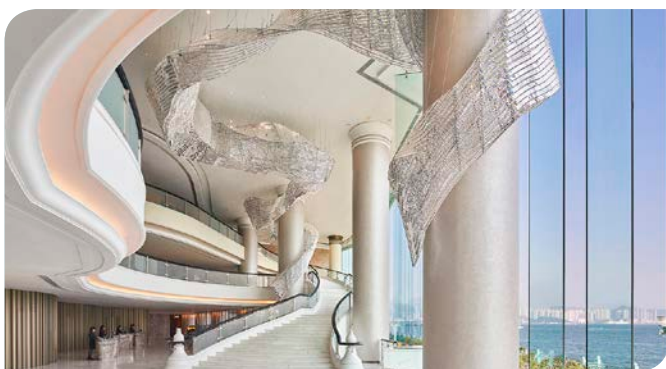


# MIXED-USE PROJECTS ARE THE FUTURE



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## A MICE hotel with spectacular harbour views



Among the top hotel groups in Hong Kong Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts has created a niche for themselves especially there two flagship hotels - Harbour Grand Hong Kong, Harbour Grand Kowloon. So when I decided to visit Hong Kong to cover an event I decided to use this opportunity to experience Harbour Grand Kowloon. Co-ordinating with Loretta Wong, Director of Marketing Communications, Harbour Grand Kowloon and Kevin Chu, Senior Marketing Communications Officer, Harbour Grand Kowloon, I landed at this multi-award winning hotel.

On arrival what probably catches most guest's attention is the imposing lobby with the grand marble staircase and the magnificent Swarovski crystals creating a wave. I was later informed that the massive 15-metre chandelier named the "Prisms of Light" is made up of approximately 150,000 Swarovski Element Strass Crystals.



Check in was smooth and though I arrived quite early they checked me in and gave me a room in the new tower with some stunning views of the harbor skyline. "The tower in which you are staying has our brand new guestrooms. The new Tower is connected to the hotel's main building by a sky bridge making it convenient for our guests to move across the buildings without stepping out," said Victor Chan Kok-wai, GM, Harbour Grand Kowloon, a veteran of 30+ years in the hospitality sector. He has also been the Chairman of the Hong Kong Hotels Association and a board member of the Hong Kong Tourism Board.

Although the hotel was under renovation (many rooms including the club lounge were not operational) the new tower rooms (you first need to take the lift to the 20th floor and then cross over) are quite comfortable with modern design, elegant furnishings



and a very comfortable sofa bed. What I liked was the handy master switch, as well as switches for the nightlight, ceiling lights, spotlight and foyer are easily accessible. The gorgeous marble bathroom (could have been more spacious) gives two options - a bath tub or a walk-in shower.

The hotel has 900+ spacious and well-furnished guestrooms including 360 brand new Tower rooms and suites. This sparkling glass structure, is right on the waterfront offering splendid views across Victoria Harbour. Infact you can get abundant views from the restaurants, fitness center, pool, and almost half of the guest rooms.

Location wise the hotel has a great advantage of being right just a few steps from the MTR Whampoa Station. From the airport one can take a taxi or the hotels limousine or the Airport Express to Kowloon Station - then 10 minutes to the hotel. The hotel provides complimentary shuttle bus to downtown Tsim Sha Tsui every 30 minutes. In case you prefer the ferry it's adjacent to Hung Hom Ferry Pier travelling to North Point. Thus from the hotel one can choose transportation by either metro, road or water. But if you prefer to walk to the downtown you can do so relishing the gorgeous views of the harbour and surroundings.

On the culinary side the hotel has five distinctive restaurants with diverse dining options. The Promenade is the hotels all day dining restaurant. Located at lobby level on the backdrop of the Victoria Harbour The Promenade showcases abundant delicacies, including Chinese, Japanese, Southeast Asian, Western dishes, as well as delectable grills and handcrafted desserts. For breakfast they have a small Indian counter and every day morning I used to relish Indian tit bits. Inafct Surendran, the Asian chef also organized a nice Indian dinner for me. The Waterfront Bar & Terrace, located on the outdoor patio offers happy hour drinks and space for private events was recently refurbished.



*Why Stay with us? Why Invest with us? Why Tie-Up with us?*



## Indias National Award Winning Hotel - Express Inn, Nashik

It's with great pride that we share Express Inn, Nashik, one of India's leading hotels was recently felicitated The National Tourism Award – 2017-18 in the best Three Star Category Hotel across India.

The award was presented on World Tourism Day. It was a double bonanza for us as this year India was hosting the official celebrations of World Tourism Day with the theme 'Tourism and Jobs: a better future for all'. So Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General, World Tourism Organization was also present at the National Tourism Award ceremony.

The award was received by our Chairman and Managing Director Mr. Narayan Shelar and Director Mr. Vikas Shelar at the hands of India's Union Tourism Minister, Hon. Prahald Singh Patel and Secretary General, World Tourism Organization, Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili. The event was also graced by the presence of Vice President of India, Hon. Venkaiah Naidu.



This has been feasible largely due to our dedication to service quality and constant product innovation. We continue with our global commitment to the cause and promotion of responsible and sustainable tourism practices in the hospitality industry.

This gives us an occasion to again thank all our staff, associates, service providers and most importantly our guests. We take this opportunity to reassure our commitment to maintain our service and quality standards.



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Victor Chan

The other restaurants are Robotayaki that provides guests an authentic Japanese culinary journey;

Harbour Grill is a fine dining restaurant; Corner Café, located in the corner of the lobby, serves premium coffee and tea as well as a selection of homemade pastries, sandwiches and other delicacies; Hoi Won Teen specialises in Cantonese cuisine. Thanks to its extensive floor-to-ceiling glass

one can enjoy 210 degrees of the Victoria Harbour without any obstruction.

Apart from the stunning views, Harbour Grand Kowloon with a private pier is a remarkable venue for MICE and weddings. With approximately 2,350 m<sup>2</sup> of event space and 12 functional venues including a brand new Whampoa Conference Centre on a dedicated floor Harbour Grand Kowloon can cater for large-scale conferences, small expos, corporate events, private parties etc.

The brand new Grand Ballroom spread over 4,500 square-foot in a pillar less hall is adorned with sculptural chandeliers made with crystals from Swarovski and equipped with state-of-the-art facilities including a high definition LED wall and built-in LCD projectors with screens. The venue can accommodate maximum 600 guests in cocktail style and 33 round tables in banquet style, the Grand Ballroom is a popular venue for grand weddings, annual general meetings, high-tech press conferences, and other

## Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts

The group manages 11 hotels in Hong Kong, with 8,500+ guest rooms, suites and serviced suites. The 11 hotels include - Harbour Grand Hong Kong, Harbour Grand Kowloon, Harbour Plaza Metropolis, Harbour Plaza North Point, Harbour Plaza Resort City, Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees, Kowloon Harbourfront Hotel, The Kowloon Hotel, Rambler Garden Hotel, Rambler Oasis Hotel and the new Hotel Alexandra.

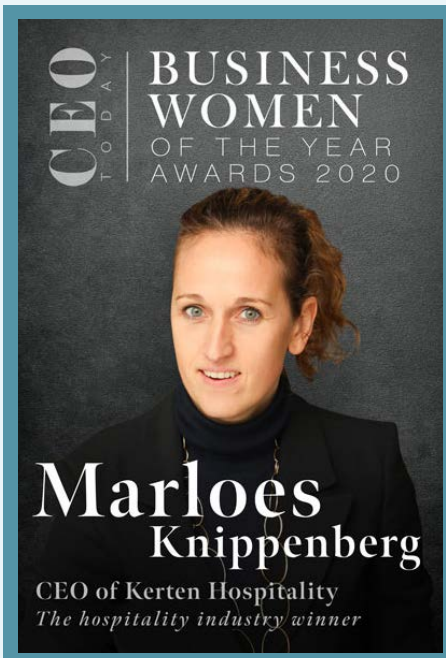
"Hotel Alexandra is the newest addition to our group. Located on the waterfront this newly built design hotel has an affluent Victorian elegance and the foyer and lobby are adorned with palettes of rich gold. When it's complete you must visit it and see its beauty," said Loretta Wong, Director of Marketing Communications, Harbour Grand Kowloon.

large-scale events.

Talking on the MICE front Victor Chan said, "The addition of Whampoa Conference Centre with seven function rooms has almost doubled our hotel's meeting and event space to 2,350 sqm. The best part is all them will have natural daylight. We must be one of the few hotels in Hong Kong to have 900 rooms as well as a good space for events."



## Marloes Knippenberg adds another feather to her cap Awarded Business Woman of the Year Award 2020



Marloes Knippenberg, CEO of Kerten Hospitality already a well known name in the hospitality industry was awarded by CEO Today 2020 Business Woman of the Year Award. Marloes is the only leader from the hospitality industry who has been recognized with this global award given to CEOs who have demonstrated expertise in taking their organisations to new heights.

Marloes' innovative mindset has established Kerten Hospitality as a disruptive, dynamic international hospitality group dedicated to the management of mixed-use developments in key global destinations. Starting with a single hotel, her dynamic leadership has seen the company take giant strides, establishing multiple brands and cementing Kerten Hospitality as a boutique mixed-use operator of choice by creating customised lifestyle destinations that give owners a huge amount of flexibility and deliver a strong return on investment.

Kerten Hospitality will see 4 projects welcome guests in 2020 starting with the organisation's first mixed-use project that will be opening as part of a unique lifestyle destination in Jeddah later this year. Marloes says, "This project was born as a dream of our Saudi Arabian owners who had a vision of new hospitality. At the time no one envisioned the country would go through such transformation with a stronger hospitality."

The other projects opening this year include Cloud 7 Residence Ayla Aqaba, The House Hotel Al Khiran in Kuwait and The House Hotel Tbilisi in Georgia, in addition to 2 newly signed mix-use developments. "Our

brands are agile and they can be combined with other brands to forge partnerships that, in turn, foster communities and collaborations. This is one of our core beliefs."

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# AsiaWorld-Expo deploys the world's first "CLEanTech" disinfection installation

The global conference and exhibition (C&E) industry has been impacted massively by the COVID-19 outbreak, and Hong Kong is no exception. The postponement and cancellation of the many exhibitions and conventions imposes chain effects on a wide variety of businesses, spanning hotel, aviation, catering and tourism sectors. Following a series of epidemic prevention measures, AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE), one of the leading exhibition and convention centres in Asia, recently introduced the world's first "CLEanTech" disinfection installation and advanced air purification technology. These high-performance disinfection initiatives at AWE set the trend for the industry as it prepares for eventual recovery.

"The Hong Kong SAR Government has announced a sum of HK\$30 billion for the Anti-epidemic Fund. More than HK\$1,000 million has been earmarked for the industry to reinvigorate Hong Kong's reputation as an international premier C&E hub. AWE welcomes the measures and goes an extra mile to proactively engage with manufacturers specialising in biotechnology and disinfection applications. By thoroughly disinfecting the venue through scientifically-proved solutions, AWE safeguards the health of visitors and staff with products of high and long-lasting efficacy, and sets the example for industry fellows to provide safe and healthy environments when event activities eventually resume," said Irene Chan, CEO, AsiaWorld-Expo Management Limited.

She further added, "In these challenging times, we are living up to our corporate social responsibilities by supporting the Government with the set-up of the temporary test centre and COVID-19 specimen collection facilities at AWE for inbound travellers from overseas. This eases the demand on hospitals for isolation wards. Once COVID-19 is under control, we will be fully ready to bring back large-scale exhibitions and exciting events in collaboration with our stakeholders."

In partnership with a professional biotech and sanitising company, AWE is the first in the MICE industry to introduce "CLEanTech", an innovative three-in-one disinfection installation combining a suite of technologies including BioEm Air Sanitising and Purifying technology, Aegis Intelligence and negative room pressure design. Subject to organisers' needs and event scale, AWE plans to deploy such device at upcoming major trade exhibitions and conventions by then visitors will be admitted through the device prior entering to event halls. The device door will be opened automatically when the visitors passes the built-in temperature checking. After entering CLEanTech, it will help to sanitise outfits and carry-on items of visitors in just 12 seconds and keep them safe.

Specifically designed for Air Sanitisation and Purification, BioEm is a Natural Botanical Disinfection solution which is well-tested and known to be effective over a wide spectrum, and can kill a variety of viruses, including SARS(99.99%), H3N2(99.99%), H1N1(99.995%), and 100% bacteria\*. The ingredients are natural and safe and can effectively kill indoor bacteria. Aegis Intelligence is remarkable for its physical puncture sterilisation

and photocatalyst disinfection and is used to purify venue facilities such as on doors and door handles at major entrances, escalator handrails, washrooms and chairs in restaurant. It can eliminate potentially dangerous microbes on objects with a long durability of up to 12 months. These safeguards help protect our frontline staff and reduce the need for frequent manual work, while also reducing reliance on traditional sanitiser which is now in high demand worldwide.

In addition to the protection of visitors, AsiaWorld-Expo also cares for the health of its staff members and has gone to great lengths beyond the standard provision of masks and hand sanitiser. AsiaWorld-Expo plans to apply Aegis Intelligence to the uniforms of frontline staff, and is committed to comprehensively eliminating bacteria and thereby strengthening the protection and safety of employees.

Sammy Tsui, Founder and Managing Director, BioEm Air Sanitising Technology Company Limited, said, "In 2003, SARS was what pushed the founding team to establish BioEm. Based on scientific evidence, we successfully used a variety of natural plant extracts to develop BioEm Air Sanitising and Purifying Liquid.



Irene Chan, CEO, AsiaWorld-Expo Management Limited

The product has passed the Long-term Inhalation Safety Test Certificate of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Human Skin Sensitive Test of Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and was accredited in the 2009 Geneva International Innovation Invention Award. In addition, we are also the exclusive Greater China agent of Aegis Intelligence, a patented product that originated in Singapore which uses photocatalysis to sterilise surrounding objects, with lasting effects of up to 12 months following application. We are proud to cooperate with AsiaWorld-Expo to contribute to the local C&E industry and in protecting people generally. AsiaWorld-Expo is the first exhibition and event venue in the world to deploy "CLEanTech" disinfection installation; we appreciate the visionary move of AWE, which serves as a role model for Hong Kong's C&E industry and the wider economy. The disinfection results seen from the use of these technologies at AsiaWorld-Expo can strengthen the confidence of exhibitors and visitors alike, contributing to the acceleration of the economic recovery of the Hong Kong C&E industry."



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# Africa: A much sought-after MICE destination

In its 15<sup>th</sup> year Meetings Africa 2020 was again able to make its mark with 100% space occupied by 329 exhibitors feels **Chandragupta Amritkar**.



It was during IMEX, Frankfurt that I had the opportunity of first interacting with Altaaf Kazi, GM, Global PR and Communications, South African Tourism. We initially spoke passionately about cricket which truly connects the two countries before moving on to MICE and tourism. He talked about South Africa's leading MICE event Meetings Africa and said he would extend a media invite.

So in January I received the invite and co-ordinating with Lesego Marimo, PR & Communications Coordinator, South African Tourism for the trip that not only included visiting the event but also visiting select tourist spots across the country (another article). But the main purpose was to cover Meetings Africa.

Meetings Africa, celebrating its 15 year, showcased most of the continent's diverse offerings – countries, destinations, hotels, gastronomy, forbidding landscapes, deserts, beautiful beaches, luxury trains, rich cultural heritage and the not to be missed wild safari expeditions. African countries and cities were promoting their MICE venues and potential offerings as associations and African meetings industry professionals interacted with hosted buyers, visitors and media.

Held at the Sandton Convention Centre in Sandton, Johannesburg, the theme for Meetings Africa 2020 was “Shared economies” looking towards collaborative African growth. Spread over three days hosted buyers, visitors and media used the opportunity not only to network but also add to their knowledge substantially. In addition presentations and panel discussions



provided insights into the business opportunities available to grow MICE in Africa. The first day was BOND Day (Business Opportunities Networking Day).

The event saw Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, Minister for Tourism, South Africa ringing the bell to open the trade floor. Speaking on the occasion she said, “Meetings Africa has assisted in creating and cementing partnerships as well as collaborations, both continentally and globally. Meetings Africa is only poised for growth going forward.”

The Minister further added collaboration rather than competition is crucial to assist all African countries to realise their potential. It is for this reason that Meetings Africa showcases the continent's diverse offerings.

Sisa Ntshona, CEO, South African Tourism expressed that Meetings Africa would encourage the rotation of meetings on the continent; “It is a platform for the regional business events industry to engage in a bid to attract more global and regional business events to Africa.”

As per the World Bank the African continent is home to the world's largest free trade area and with a 1.2 billion percent market it is poised to create an entirely new development path, harnessing the potential of its resources and people.

## Exhibitors

The expo, spread over a couple of days, had quite a variety of exhibitors from all over the continent.

We had the opportunity to interact with quite a few of them. While many exhibitors were quite happy with the show, a few

## Statistics: Meetings Africa 2020

- 100% of the exhibitor stands sold – a vast improvement from 95% in 2019.
- 118 square metres more floor space sold compared to last year.
- 329 exhibitors
- 155 main exhibitors, three more than last year
- 321 buyers that include 205 international hosted buyers
- 8,000 meetings held, 200 more than 2019.





expressed concerns over the rapidly growing coronavirus and how it would impact their business.

From the hotels - Hilton (Seychelles) and Marriott were able to get some of their top end hotels to participate. India's Taj group also had their presence with two hotels - Taj Pamodzi Lusaka and Taj Cape Town and Ajit Jha, BD Director was representing them.

Naomi C Ndaradzi, Director Marketing, Don Tours and Safaris from Namibia and Dexter T Chikerema, Operations Manager, African sunset travels were promoting their wildlife safaris spread across the continent. Tanzania, though located towards the end of the hall had good presence. Bharath Swarup, DoSM, Ramada Resort Dar Es Salaam found the event worth the trip.

Mauritius as always was a crowded stand. Anielle Ramsahye, MICE and Cruise manager, Concorde explained in depth the opportunities in Mauritius and its potential for Indian visitors. Esmeeta Ramchurrin, Account Director - Groups, Mauritius, Marriott and Rosabelle Fanny, sales manager, Hilton hotels highlighted their hotels uniqueness.

Muriuki Murithi, Business Development, Kenya National Convention Bureau explained why Kenya is an attractive

destination for both MICE and leisure. Chipping in Shaileen Shah, GM, Trade Mark hotel said that many Indians visit Kenya and quite a few Bollywood actors have stayed at her hotel. "Kenya is quite India friendly with a lot of citizens having Indian roots. Its an excellent country to shoot movies. There's a lot to see and numerous activities. Also Indian delicacies are easily available," said Shaileen Shah.

Malawi, still a much untapped destination for Indians had some good exhibitors. Was looking forward to meeting Sarah Leah Njanji, but somehow we kept missing each other. Hajab Kamboj, BDM, Serendip Hotels gave me some good insights on not only her property but also on Malawi.

From the education side there was the School of Tourism and Hospitality from University of Johannesburg. Kagiso Mouse, Marketing Manager said, "Apart from the normal courses we have a BTech in Tourism Management and one can also do PhD in Tourism and Hospitality Management. Bursaries are available for students and I think if we can get Indian students we can look at some special offers and bursaries for them too."

During the networking events caught up with quite a few buyers including Senthil Kumart from CWT, Dubai and Rajat Sawhney from Rave tours and travels, India.



## Interaction with Media



Media interacting with Mmamoloko Kubayi Ngubane, Minister for Tourism, South Africa and Sisa Ntshona, CEO, South African Tourism

Exclusively speaking to the hosted media Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane highlighted the importance of MICE especially business events. "We have attracted a lot of traders + SME to Meetings Africa as the business events sector is not just crucial to the tourism industry but also for the economy of our country and continent," said Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane.

Regarding her recent visit to India she reflected, "We have started to see result from our recent visit to India. We had roadshows and I am quite happy by the response."

The minister as well as the CEO Sisa Ntshona are quite bullish on the Indian market. "Destination wedding is what we are very keen to have. January being off peak season, Indian weddings can be planned as they can get venues and hotels at a reasonable price," said

Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane.

Adding to the minister Sisa Ntshona said, "Many Indian companies hold their corporate events at global locations. I am sure they will find South Africa a lucrative market, especially the pharma and ICT sector. We have all the facilities for a MICE event and an excellent getaway - attractive venues, gorgeous sights, exotic wildlife, rich culture, ancient history etc. This can be an incentive to bring their spouses and we can add value." When questioned on the launch of e-visa for Indians, the minister said technicalities are being looked into and should be a reality soon.

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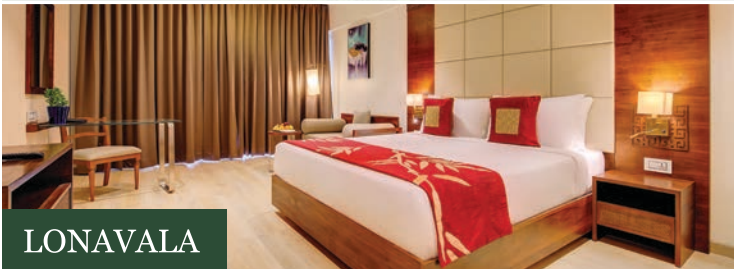
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