

# GLOBAL FEATURES

Disseminating Information Across The Globe

*Incorporating*

## Global Technologies

*Your Window To The Tech and Startup World*

## Global Destinations

*A Guide To The World of MICE and Tourism*

- HICAP, Singapore
- Hilton, Frankfurt
- The Boathouse Pulau Tioman
- MKTE 2024, Kenya
- Hotel Gokulam, Chennai
- SRM, Chennai
- Gulf Air



Empowering Readers: Our Most Precious Asset



**KOVALAM**



**TRIVANDRUM**



**KOZHIKODE**



**BANGALORE**



**COORG**



**KUMARAKOM**

## GATEWAY TO TIMELESS HOSPITALITY



### KERALA

Kumarakom - Gokulam Grand Resort & Spa  
Kovalam - Gokulam Grand  
Turtle on the Beach Resort  
Trivandrum - Gokulam Grand  
Kozhikode-Gokulam Grand

### KARNATAKA

Bangalore - Gokulam Grand Hotel & Spa  
Coorg - Gokulam Grand Resort & Spa

### KERALA

Cochin - Gokulam Park Hotel  
Cochin - Gokulam Convention Centre  
Munnar - Gokulam Park  
Guruvayur - Gokulam Park  
Kasaragod - Gokulam Park  
Nalanda Resort

### TAMILNADU

Chennai - Gokulam Park Sabari  
Chennai - Gokulam Park, Ashok Nagar  
Coimbatore - Gokulam Park

### KARNATAKA

Bellary - Gokulam Park

### KERALA

Guruvayur - Sree Gokulam, Vanamala  
Guruvayur - Sree Gokulam, Sabari  
Guruvayur - Sree Gokulam, Apartments  
Thrissur - Sree Gokulam Residency, Amballur  
Kollam - Sree Gokulam Residency, Oyoor  
Manjeri - Sree Gokulam Residency  
Thalassery - Sree Gokulam Fort

### TAMILNADU

Gudalur - Sree Gokulam Highrange Inn

## Dear Friends

Hospitality professionals, investors and travel related professionals will all converge in Singapore for HICAP 2024 – the biggest gathering of influential leaders, pioneering executives and innovative start-up's. The 2024 program and its topics have already been developed and announced with the help of the HICAP 2024 Program Planning Committee and Regional Advisors, representing leaders from the hotel and lodging industry, the investment community, and key advisors. The program will feature over 30 sessions and panels led by about 150 industry leaders across all sectors of the hotel investment and tourism industries as they look ahead to the future and what evolution is on the horizon.

Continuing my love relationship with Hilton Frankfurt City Centre, this year was no different as again I had the opportunity of relishing the fabulous hospitality of this Hilton property and the ever delightful host Marc Snijders, GM, Hilton Frankfurt City Centre. Situated in the heart of the city Hilton Frankfurt City Centre offers urban and loft living style guest rooms with recently renovated world-class meeting facilities. Among the major plus points is the Hudson Yards Bar, Lounge & Dining, an amazing Executive Lounge and a state-of-the-art Health and Fitness Club along with the half-Olympic size pool. A hotel to fall in adoration with, it recently celebrated its Silver Jubilee. We did an interview with Marc Snijders.

Today Sree Gokulam Hotels & Resorts has 22 hotels and resorts across southern India but it all began in Chennai and in this issue we focus on their two Chennai properties where sustainability is being taken on priority. We interacted with an industry stalwart, Anand Ramachandran, who is Cluster General Manager for Gokulam Hotels Pvt. Ltd. handling two of their hotels in Chennai as well as an industrial catering unit currently serving 3500 meals per day.

The Boathouse Pulau Tioman, accessible only by boat, is a 31-villa resort that is inspired by nature and styled after the traditional Malay houses. Its Communal Hall gives an opportunity for corporates to hold conferences and seminars or even commemorate corporate milestones. . We found it an ideal destination for one to immerse oneself in rustic tranquillity, away from the hustle and bustle of one's city and just bask in the charming hospitality of the resort.

While SRM University is renowned globally for churning out some of the best engineers and technocrats, its Institute of Hotel and Catering Management is stirring a multitude of ardent aspiring hoteliers. SRM IHM most popular courses are B. Sc. In Hotel & Catering Management, B. Sc. In Hospitality & Hotel Administration, Diploma in Hotel & Catering Science, Craftmanship Course in Food as well as a PG Diploma.

MKTE is a Pan African trade fair organized and hosted by Kenya Tourism Board annually which is fast developing into a leading tourism global event. We have reviewed this all important event.



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SHANGHAI  
RANKING

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Shanghai World University Rankings



RANKINGS 2023

University  
18<sup>th</sup> Rank

## nature index

Nature index ranking reflects SRMIST's  
Research excellence and institutional performance.

38

Overall

35

Chemistry

35

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37

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24

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# Gulf Air: On the spree of expansion



With 29th Routes World event happening in the Kingdom of Bahrain and with Gulf Air being the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain we thought it ideal to focus on this prominent airline.

**F**ounded in 1950, Gulf Air is the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain. While there was a time when it served as flag carrier for the UAE, Oman and Qatar, it remains a force to reckon in the Middle East region, serving over 50+ cities across Africa, Asia and Europe from its main base at Bahrain International Airport. Gulf Air has been operating direct flights between the Kingdom of Bahrain and India since 1960.

## Expansion

Gulf Air's efforts to recalibrate its network to seamless connectivity from the globe into Bahrain with clear intentions to be the enabler for increasing tourism footfall into Bahrain. With aims to explore new routes and destinations Gulf Air recently launched its new direct flights from Bahrain to Munich, Germany further solidifying its commitment to enhancing European network and connecting Bahrain to key destinations worldwide.

These new flights will be operated by the state-of-the-art Airbus 321neo aircraft that will offer convenient travel options between Bahrain International Airport and Munich International Airport (MUC) on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday.

This will be Gulf Air's second destination in the German market including its existing daily flights to Frankfurt underscoring the airline's strategic expansion within Europe including potential new routes in Central and Eastern Europe. Gulf Air is preparing for a potential entry into the U.S. market though specific U.S. destinations have yet to be announced though New York is believed to be a likely target. Gulf Air's recent investments in fleet modernization are also set to bolster its expansion plans.

The airline is working closely with the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority to align the airlines connectivity strategy that will present significant opportunities to attract tourism, events and foreign direct investment.

## Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility

Gulf Air also plans to build state of the art Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility at Bahrain International Airport. The project is expected to be a significant and qualitative addition to Bahrain's aviation industry. The landmark facility will underscore Gulf Air's continuing commitment to excellence and innovation. Critically, the new MRO facility will bring its maintenance

operations in line with the highest international standards and the latest technologies in aircraft engineering, automation, sustainability, and environmental footprint reduction. The MRO complex will house a 20,000+ square meter temperature-controlled hangar, stores, workshops, and a dedicated tarmac, ensuring top-tier reliability and readiness for its own fleet as well as that of other customer operators.

## Hello Bahrain! Free City Tour

Gulf Air is providing an opportunity to its guests to experience the vibrant culture and rich history of Bahrain with a Free City Tour, which takes guests on an exciting detour from the airport. If you are transiting in Bahrain for more than 5 hours and within 24 hours guests can explore the island's history and landmarks in just 3 hours – a chance to discover the landmarks and sceneries of Bahrain, including the Souq, historical landmarks, and museums, as you stopover at the country's cultural and historical hotspots. This tour is jointly organised by Gulf Air Group, Bahrain International Airport & Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority. But make sure you book online before you go.

## Falcon Gold Lounge

Gulf Air's flagship Falcon Gold Lounge in Bahrain International Airport is a sprawling lounge with a number of impressive facilities and at a given time can hold a capacity of up to 400 people.



Passengers can relax in the tranquillity with luxurious chairs as well as a few daybeds with pillows. There's also a business center with half a dozen monitors and a printer. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer panoramic views of the airport runway. There are many dining options available throughout the lounge and a pretty good selection of gastronomic options including vegetarian. It is open to Gulf Air business class passengers and Falcon flyer Black, Gold, and Silver members.

## “We are constantly looking for new ways to enhance our environmental and social footprint”



Continuing my love relationship with Hilton Frankfurt City Centre, this year was no different as again I had the opportunity of relishing the fabulous hospitality of this Hilton property and the ever delightful host **Marc Snijders, GM, Hilton Frankfurt City Centre**. An industry stalwart he has been an inspiration to many and puts it beautifully when he says "it's all about people". At the helm of Hilton Frankfurt City Centre for almost a decade, Marc Snijders hopes to pass on his passion for hospitality to the budding youngsters. Situated in the heart of the city Hilton Frankfurt City Centre offers urban and loft living style guest rooms with recently renovated world-class meeting facilities. Among the major plus points is the Hudson Yards Bar, Lounge & Dining, an amazing Executive Lounge and a state-of-the-art Health and Fitness Club along with the half-Olympic size pool. A hotel to fall in adoration with, it recently celebrated its Silver Jubilee. In a conversation with **Marc Snijders** he talks not only about his love for the profession, the hotel but also on the importance of guest satisfaction. **Excerpts**



**You've spent much of your career with Hilton group. How did it all begin and your progress over the years?**

Indeed, I started my hospitality career 26 years ago with Hilton. Fresh out of hotel Management University, I joined the Hilton Frankfurt City Centre in the pre-opening as a Conference & Event Executive.

Over the years I held various commercial roles and my journey took me from Frankfurt to Budapest and back to Frankfurt, to join the pre-opening team of the Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn at Frankfurt Airport - two spectacular hotels, side-by-side. After the successful opening of this dual-branded hotel complex, I was offered the fantastic opportunity to take over the lead at Hilton Frankfurt City Centre, the hotel where it all started for me. It was a true home coming, and now 9 years later it still feels like that.

**What sets Hilton Frankfurt City Centre apart from other hotels in the area?**

Hilton Frankfurt City Centre is unique in many ways. We are situated in the heart of Frankfurt and the location could not be better for both our business and leisure guests. Furthermore, the



hotel featured a fantastic make-over in the past years with an urban and entirely new rooms and suites concept as well as new dining venue and event facilities. What however truly makes us stand out from other hotels in Frankfurt are the people, who fill the hotel with the light & warmth of hospitality every day, every guest. The fantastic team at the hotel truly makes the difference.

**True your hotel looks wonderful. Any particular design elements that you would like to highlight?**

There are so many special elements in the hotel, starting with the 50 meter glass atrium, which offers the guests a fantastic skyline view when they take the elevator up to their room. The half-Olympic size pool is another unique element. It was built in the 50s for the citizens of Frankfurt, and today it is integrated into the hotel's premium fitness and wellness club.

**What are your top priorities when it comes to the guest experience and how do you measure and track guest satisfaction?**

For us, our focus is about making the stay into an experience and



understanding the purpose of our guests. This starts with the guest communication at the time of reservation and continues at arrival. We want to truly get to know our guests and their preferences, to create an individual and personal experience. We measure the experience throughout the stay but also after the stay, through public review channels but also through our own guest survey. We use all this feedback to see how we can optimize the stay and look actively for trends.

#### Any distinctive culinary offerings?

We offer our guests a fantastic experience in our Hudson Yards signature dining and drinking venue. The culinary concept was designed around an urban New York experience, as Frankfurt is often referred to as Mini-Manhattan. Guests can enjoy the best of New York and Frankfurt, with a great variety of seasonal offerings as well as the classic New York drinks, such as the Cosmopolitan.

#### Hilton is committed to reducing carbon footprint. How do you plan to operate more eco- friendly/ be sustainable?

We are constantly looking for new ways to enhance our environmental and social foot print. At the moment we are pursuing a solar project, which will allow us to generate a part of energy requirements through renewable sources. We also enhanced our waste management and local sourcing. We for example offer guests a 50-mile menu, containing regional ingredients from the 50 mile radius around Frankfurt.

On the social front, we are working with a local partner to welcome people with a disability into our team, and have successfully hired 3 fantastic new team members through this partnership. As a result the Hilton Frankfurt City Centre was



### At a glance

- Close to major business, shopping and tourist destinations
- 342 urban guest rooms including 14 suites and the Presidential suite
- 3 Executive Floors with Executive Lounge access
- Ballroom with capacity for up to 550 people
- 16 modern event and meeting rooms
- PARK Restaurant & Terrace and Hudson Yards Bar, Lounge & Dining
- 2,000m2 Health & Fitness Club with a 25m swimming pool



nominated for a prestigious State award for exemplary inclusion efforts.

#### How do you actively try to motivate your staff and teach them hospitality philosophy?

It really starts at the recruiting process. We hire for attitude, not for skill. We are looking for unique personalities first and foremost. Skills can be trained. Secondly, it's about empowerment. Team members at the front are empowered to make it right and create authentic experiences. We have a flat hierarchy and meet each other at eyesight, regardless of the title we carry on our business card. I firmly believe that the people who work at the front deserve a voice and a seat at the table, when decisions are being taken. Lastly, it's about recognition. We celebrate successes together every month and live a culture of acknowledgment and collaboration.

#### What do you find inspiring about working in hospitality and being a general manager?

The greatest source of inspiration are the people. The team members, who come to work every day with energy, enthusiasm and dedication to make others, our guests, feel special. Conrad Hilton founded this great company over 100 years ago with the firm belief, that we hotel men and women can make a difference in the world, and still today we follow his vision, "to fill the earth with the light & warmth of hospitality"

# Gokulam Hotels & Resorts

## Prioritise sustainability and eco-friendly practices



Today Sree Gokulam Hotels & Resorts has 22 hotels and resorts across southern India but it all began in Chennai and in this issue we focus on their two Chennai properties where sustainability is being taken on priority



Anand Ramachandran

Having interacted with the groups dynamic and tech savvy MD, Baiju Gopalan, and covered their lovely properties – the award winning Gokulam Grand Resort and Spa, Kumarakom and Gokulam Park & Convention Centre Kochi, an excellent MICE venue, I was excited to again visit their Chennai properties. This for me meant an opportunity to again spend quality time with an industry stalwart, Anand Ramachandran,

who is Cluster General Manager for Gokulam Hotels Pvt. Ltd. handling two of their hotels in Chennai as well as an industrial catering unit currently serving 3500 meals per day.

### Gokulam Park Ashok Nagar

Anand Ramachandran, Cluster General Manager at Gokulam Park Sabari OMR & Gokulam Park Ashok Nagar, Chennai, a veteran of 30 years in the hospitality segment has been a driving force for both properties. Having met him several times over the last decade what I noticed that made him a success was his mentality for attention to details and the same today he is implementing as



he gets Gokulam Park Ashok Nagar renovated and redesigned. “Gokulam Park Ashok Nagar was the group’s first hotel, a 35+ year old property which first started as Bharath Restaurant before getting converted to a hotel. So it was not an easy job to start with renovation. Being very popular among guests we had to make sure that the hotel was partially operational while renovation was being done. We took a floor at a time. When lobby was done we created a makeshift reception on the floor where rooms were all done. This is being followed by our restaurant and banquetting hall,” said Anand Ramachandran.

Gokulam Park Ashok Nagar is boutique hotel whose restaurant is known as the place where many movie scripts have been read out, poems written. Its return guests both in the rooms and F&B accounting for a major share of the hotel revenues even today with each guest having some story or memory to share about the hotel. The hotel offers accommodation in three room categories - executive rooms, suite and mini suite. Quite a few of its staff members too have been with the hotel for over two decades.

### Gokulam Park Sabari

The other property Gokulam Park Sabari, is a luxury hotel located in the heart of the IT Corridor on Old Mahabalipuram Road. It is an 88 room 4 star classified property with all the trappings of a business hotel including a smoking lounge for all guests as all its rooms are smoke free. Opened in 2007 and acquired by Gokulam Hotels in 2015, it is constantly upgrading itself to retain its place in now what is a pack of hotels of all sizes and offerings in the area while retaining its old charm in terms of huge room sizes, rustic furniture and South Indian food offerings.

“Our starting room size, deluxe at 280 sq.ft. is quite spacious compared to our competitors in the region. Our suites, spread across 525 sq. ft. come with a spacious ensuite bathroom and a dining cum living room with floor-to-ceiling windows offering resplendent city views,” said Anand Ramachandran.

The 24x7 Bytes at Gokulam Park, Sabari, a multi-cuisine restaurant in the hotel is a favourite not just among guests but also locals. Not only do they present delicacies from all around the

# DISCOVER PRIVATE ISLAND RETREATS AT COMO MALDIVES



## **COMO Cocoa Island: Your Tranquil Oasis**

Nestled in the South Malé Atoll, COMO Cocoa Island is a hidden gem known for its serene atmosphere and unique overwater villas. Arrive in style with a 40-minute speedboat transfer from the Malé international airport.

Indulge in the allure of 33 overwater villas, including the iconic Dhoni Villas, reminiscent of traditional Maldivian fishing boats. With their high ceilings, airy interiors, and expansive windows, these villas provide a seamless connection to the surrounding turquoise lagoon.

The COMO Shambhala Retreat, spanning a third of the island, is a holistic haven offering yoga, Pilates, meditation, and spa treatments to rejuvenate your body and soul.

From diving and snorkelling to sunset and night fishing, adventure awaits at COMO Cocoa Island. With more than 20 dive sites within a short boat ride, explore the mesmerizing marine life in crystal-clear waters.

## **COMO Maalifushi: Tropical Elegance**

Embrace the unspoiled beauty of Thaa Atoll at COMO Maalifushi, a luxury escape accessible by a scenic 60-minute seaplane journey from Malé.

Be captivated by the allure of 33 overwater and 32 beach accommodations, providing unrivaled views of the Indian Ocean. Relish culinary delights at Tai, the Japanese seafood restaurant, or savour tropical flavours at Madi, where Maldivian, Mediterranean, Indonesian, and Thai influences converge. Unearth adventure with diving, swimming alongside gentle whale sharks, or riding the waves at renowned surf breaks. For an intimate escape, venture to the private island of Lavadhoo for a romantic picnic under the stars.

Rediscover serenity at COMO Shambhala, where signature treatments and open-air yoga pavilions await. Families are welcomed with the Play by COMO Space, offering purposeful activities for children aged four to 12. retreats promise an unforgettable escape.

Embrace paradise today. Experience the unmatched allure of COMO Cocoa Island and COMO Maalifushi in the Maldives.

*Among the Maldivian island resorts, COMO Maalifushi (above) and COMO Cocoa Island stand apart with their understated style, captivating the spirit of the Indian Ocean and barefoot chic ambiance.*





world the decor is excellent.

Gokulam Park, Sabari has four banquet halls, each of which is beautifully designed and impressively furnished. All equipped with state-of-the-art amenities such as Wi-Fi access, a projector, audio-visual equipment and a banqueting team. The halls are ideal venues to play host to a plethora of events in Chennai - be it a wedding, a birthday party, a conference or a business meeting. "Our 4 halls can accommodate nearly 230 guests at any given time with the largest hall Hibiscus that is spread over 1700 sq. ft. can accommodate 150 pax. Apart from this we have a boardroom that's quite popular among the corporate that can hold 15 persons," said Anand Ramachandran.

On the terrace they have a nice fitness centre with a range of high-end gym equipment. The swimming pool and spa are other attractions. With a huge space on the terrace plans are afoot to build a new rooftop restaurant.

### Technology

Technology is the buzz word everywhere and Anand Ramachandran has started implementing it in his hotels. The first difference that I noticed on this visit was the implementation of USB ports next to beds in the rooms. "The aim is to make life easier for our guests - a seamless experience wherever possible. Though certainly not looking at robots replacing the human touch," said a smiling Anand Ramachandran.



### Sustainability

With both properties having coming up in times when sustainability was not even thought of, the group are constantly evolving keeping in mind the clarity that we need to take care of our environment and environs. It involves adhering to principles of sustainability and compliance with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards.

The group does prioritise sustainability and eco-friendly practices and are committed to continuously improving and implementing initiatives that benefit both guests and the environment. "One of our most significant eco-friendly initiatives is our plastic-free policy. We have implemented a no-single-use-plastic policy and have introduced reusable glass bottles. We also encourage guests to reduce their plastic waste suggesting eco-friendly alternatives for amenities and toiletries as well how to limit water waste. The amount of energy consumed in our hotels is substantial and I and my team are taking appropriate measures to reduce its carbon footprint. All lightings are changed to LED's, our public washrooms lighting has motion sensors, electricity through windmill energy where possible etc. Talks on adding solar energy to one of the properties is also in pipeline," said Anand Ramachandran.

Apart from these initiatives, the group is involved in waste water management in terms of an operational STP, rain water harvesting, recycled STP water being reused for watering green patches as well as - a work in progress to slowly plan out and convert to an Induction based food production department. Plans are afoot at converting food waste into Bio-Gas in one of their upcoming projects. They are also in the process of converting all their vehicles to EV and even have charging points for guests both resident and non-resident. "We not only prioritise sustainability in the way we operate but also support the local community by providing jobs to locals as well as ensuring that the community benefits from the hotel operations," said Anand Ramachandran.

### Outdoor catering unit

Sree Gokulam Hotels & Resorts has a par excellent outdoor catering unit specialist in Institutional and industrial catering both onsite and offsite. "Our industrial catering unit currently serves 3500 meals per day. We have additional space close to our Gokulam Park, Sabari and by the second quarter of next year we will have a huge set up that can cater to almost 20000 meals a day," said Anand Ramachandran.

Once it's ready we plan to do a focus on this unit too.

Sree Gokulam Hotels & Resorts, already a force to reckon in India's hospitality sector started way back in 1968. Since its humble beginnings in Mylapore Gokulam has grown exponentially, branching itself across 22 hotels and resorts across iconic cities and towns in southern India. The group features a diverse collection of properties spanning three categories Gokulam Grand, Gokulam Park and Gokulam Residency.

## HICAP 2024: A program packed with information and knowledge



Hospitality professionals, investors and travel related professionals will all converge in Singapore for HICAP 2024 – the biggest gathering of influential leaders, pioneering executives and innovative start-up's says **Chandragupta Amritkar**

As Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific (HICAP) embarks on its 34th year, the conference is expected to be as vibrant, productive, and meaningful as ever. HICAP draws internationally influential decision-makers, experienced advisors and specialists, and industry pundits: Investors, Owners, Developers, Hotel Chain & Management Companies, Investment Bankers, Lenders, Advisors & Intermediaries, Architects & Designers, Government Tourism Officials and Media.

The 2024 program and its topics have already been developed and announced with the help of the HICAP 2024 Program Planning Committee and Regional Advisors, representing leaders from the hotel and lodging industry, the investment community, and key advisors. The program will feature over 30 sessions and panels led by about 150 industry leaders across all sectors of the hotel investment and tourism industries as they look ahead to the future and what evolution is on the horizon.

### HICAP Tech Connection

The Tech Challenge and Lounge will make its return to Singapore on 16-18 October 2024, providing companies with the opportunity to exhibit and present their innovations at HICAP.

The HICAP Tech Lounge allows sponsors the opportunity to showcase their tech product and/or service to HICAP delegates via a display space on the event floor.

### The HICAP Deals of the Year Awards

HICAP's commitment to the regional hotel investment community extends beyond hosting networking events and conferences. The HICAP Deal Of the Year Awards highlight the most dynamic deals and developments and honour the on-going achievements of our industry's leaders.

**Reggie Shiu Development of the Year** – This Award recognizes the single development of the year representing the accomplishments of material market impact in a variety of ways including: overcoming challenges to completion, scale, innovation, quality, performance, and return on investment. The Award is named after Reggie Shiu, formerly of Accor Asia Pacific and a pioneer of the regional hotel industry. Mr Shiu and most of his family perished tragically in the Asian Tsunami of 2005.

**HICAP Deals of the Year** – The HICAP Single Asset Transaction and Merger & Acquisition of the Year Awards

are given to the transaction, merger or acquisition of the year representing the most significant and/or dynamic deals.

**Single Asset Transaction of the Year** - The HICAP Single Asset Transaction of the Year Award recognizes hotel(s) and/or resort(s) in which more than a 50 percent ownership stake has been acquired (transaction closed) in Asia Pacific.

**Merger & Acquisition of the Year** - The HICAP Merger & Acquisition of the Year Award recognizes an acquisition of a controlling stake in a portfolio of hotels, company, or brand ownership entity in Asia Pacific or undertaken by an Asian-based company.

#### Award Categories/Criteria

Category 1 – Building Renovation, Preservation, Adaptive Reuse and Conversion

Category 2 - Climate and Biodiversity Action

Category 3 - Positive Community Impact

Category 4 - Sustainable Design

**HICAP Sustainable Hotel Awards** - The annual HICAP Sustainable Hotel Awards are designed to recognize hotels in the Asia Pacific region creating innovative new methods, strategies, and technologies to face today's sustainable development challenge, while providing tangible examples of sustainable best practices that can be replicated and adapted across the region.

By segmenting sustainable hotel practices into four categories, HICAP recognizes the key areas where hotel investment, development, and operations can have the biggest impact locally and globally. The categories enable hotels of all sizes, asset classes, and operating structures to showcase their leadership in embedding sustainability into their decision-making processes.

The **Rising Star Award Asia Pacific** was created in partnership with the HICAP, to identify the future leaders of this important region for the hospitality industry. The award is presented annually at HICAP to a candidate living and working in the region.

In the following few pages we have given HICAP program details to enable our august readers to plan in advance their schedule so they don't miss out on listening to speakers of their choice and award as well as networking events.

*HICAP 2024 is scheduled to be held from Oct 16 – 18, 2024 at Fairmont Singapore & Swissotel The Stamford*

34<sup>TH</sup> Edition  
**HICAP**  
 HOTEL INVESTMENT  
 CONFERENCE ASIA PACIFIC  
 BY NORTHSTAR



16-18 October 2024  
 Fairmont Singapore &  
 Swissotel The Stamford  
 HICAPConference.com

**WEDNESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2024**

**8:00am-8:00pm** **REGISTRATION & INFORMATION**  
 Meets In: **Convention Foyer (Level 4)**  
 Sponsored By: **TUI BLUE Hotels & Resorts**

**8:30am-9:30am** **CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**  
 Meets In: **Fairmont Ballroom Foyer**

**8:30am-6:00pm** **CONTINUOUS COFFEE & TEA**  
 Meets In: **Fairmont Ballroom Foyer**  
 Sponsored By: **Unifocus**

**9:00am-9:45am** **QUICKLINK**  
 Meets In: **Moor & Morrison**  
 It's speed dating – HICAP Style! If you are coming to HICAP to meet people, Quicklink is a great way to start! Participants should bring plenty of business cards to this session.  
 Facilitators: **Eric Levy**, Managing Director, Tourism Solutions International  
**Shi'ai Liang**, Senior Director, Development, South East Asia & Korea, IHG Hotels & Resorts

**9:50am-10:10am** **AI WITHIN THE REALM OF DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY**  
 Meets In: **Canning**  
 Presenter: **Gaurang Khemka**, Founder and Design Director, URBNarc

**10:10am-11:10am** **HICAP TECH CHALLENGE – WHAT'S 'HOT' IN HOTEL TECHNOLOGY?**  
 Let hotel owners be the judge!  
 Meets In: **Canning**  
 Host: **Stephanie Ricca**, Editorial Director, Hotel News Now  
 Judges: **Nick Cocks**, Managing Partner, Velocity Ventures Pte Ltd  
**Giuliano Esposito**, Partner, High Street Holdings  
**Siddhant Jhunjunwala**, PAG Real Assets  
**Tasos Kousloglou**, CEO – Hotel Division, Sun Hung Kai Properties  
**Hoe Kit Mak**, Managing Director, Lodging Private Equity Fund, CapitaLand Investment  
 Presenters: **Monceesh Arora**, CEO, Unifocus  
**Will Howes**, Managing Director, Sales, Revinate  
**Vic Shen**, Founder & CEO, Aiello International Taiwan Co., Ltd.  
**Simon Yeung**, Founder & CEO, iMBrace Limited

**11:15am-12:00pm** **HOTEL INVESTMENTS 101 – FROM ACRONYMS TO ZONING**  
 Meets In: **Canning**  
 Moderator: **Andrea Belfanti**, CEO, ISHC

Panelists:  
**Paul Dean**, Principal, Dean & Associates  
**Giuliano Esposito**, Partner, High Street Holdings  
**Yutaka Maruyama**, Executive Director, World Brands Collection  
**Cyndy Tan Jarabata**, CEO, TAJARA Hospitality

**12:00pm-1:00pm**  
 Meets In: **NETWORKING LUNCH**  
**Fairmont Ballroom Foyer**

**1:00pm-2:00pm**  
**HICAP MASTER CLASS: 2024 HMA SURVEY – TRENDS & CHANGES REVEALED**  
**Padang & Collyer**  
 Baker McKenzie  
 Presented By: **Roy Melick**, Of Counsel, Baker McKenzie  
 Moderator: **Sebastian Busa**, Partner, Baker McKenzie  
**Xander Nijens**, Senior Managing Director, Head of Advisory & Asset Management, JLL Hotels & Hospitality

Panelists:  
**Paul Dean**, Principal, Dean & Associates  
**Giuliano Esposito**, Partner, High Street Holdings  
**Yutaka Maruyama**, Executive Director, World Brands Collection  
**Cyndy Tan Jarabata**, CEO, TAJARA Hospitality

**2:15pm-4:35pm**  
 Meets In: **PLENARY SESSION**  
**Padang & Collyer**

**2:15pm-2:25pm**  
 Speaker: **WELCOME REMARKS**  
**Jeff Higley**, President, The BHN Group

**2:25pm-2:45pm**  
 Speaker: **ECONOMIC OUTLOOK**  
**Han Teng Chua**, Economist, DBS Bank

**2:45pm-3:25pm**  
 Host: **TRAVEL & TOURISM OUTLOOK**  
**Stephanie Ricca**, Editorial Director, Hotel News Now  
 Guests: **Jihong He**, Executive Chair, H World International  
**Melissa Ow**, Chief Executive, Singapore Tourism Board

**3:25pm-3:40pm**  
 Speaker: **HOTEL PERFORMANCE OUTLOOK**  
**Jesper Palmqvist**, Senior Director – Asia Pacific, STR

**3:40pm-4:30pm**  
 Moderator: **VIEWS FROM THE BOARDROOM – ROUND ONE**  
**James Chappell**, Global Business Director, Horwath HTL  
 Panelists: **Peng Sum Choe**, Chief Executive Officer, Pan Pacific Hotels Group  
**Chin Fen Eu**, CEO, Frasers Hospitality  
**Yoshiki Kaneda**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Seibu Prince Hotels Worldwide  
**Jean-Jacques Morin**, Group Deputy CEO and Premium, Midscale & Economy Division CEO, Accor  
**Alan Watts**, President, Asia Pacific, Hilton

**4:30pm-4:35pm**  
 Speaker: **WRAP-UP REMARKS**  
**Jeff Higley**, President, The BHN Group

**4:50pm-5:40pm**  
**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

## SESSION 01

## A SPOTLIGHT ON SOUTHEAST ASIA – INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES &amp; CHALLENGES

Meets In:

Moderators:

**Canning****Stella Blythe**, Director, Hotels & Hospitality, Capital Markets, Asia, CBRE**Lada Shelkownikova**, Partner, Hotels & Hospitality, Watson, Farley, & Williams

Panelists:

**Maria Ariizumi**, Vice President, Development, South East Asia, Hilton**Kieran Bestall**, Managing Director, Private Equity, Ares Management Asia (S)**Julien Naouri**, Senior Vice President, Investment Sales, JLL's Hotels & Hospitality Group**Murphy Zhu**, President, Asia Pacific, H World International

## SESSION 02

## ACQUISITIONS – HOTEL INVESTMENT RETURNS &amp; MARKET DYNAMICS

Meets In:

Moderator:

**Moor****Calvin Li**, EVP, Head of Transaction Advisory, JLL's Hotels & Hospitality Group

Panelists:

**Kusumine Enami**, Managing Partner, AB Capital Investment Limited**Jason Leong**, Chief Investment Officer, Frasers Hospitality**Shyn Yee Ho-Strangas**, Managing Director, Data and Software Solutions, PropertyGuru Group**Mina Li**, Director, Hotel IAM Advisory**Rakesh Patel**, CEO & Founder, Alta Capital Real Estate

## SESSION 03

## DEVELOPMENT – ADAPTIVE RE-USE &amp; CONVERSIONS

Meets In:

Moderator:

**Morrison****Harper Lan**, Senior Consultant, KLand Asset Management Company

Panelists:

**Carolina Fagnani**, Vice President, Development SEAP, Radisson Hotel Group**Shinya Tawata**, Co-Founder & CFO, Section L Hazel Teo, VP Asset Management, Worldwide Hotels Pte Ltd**Zoe Wu**, Executive Director, Horwath HTL

## SESSION 04

## OWNERSHIP – WHITE LABEL REVOLUTION

Meets In:

Moderator:

**Hullet****Sebastian Busa**, Partner, Baker McKenzie

Panelists:

**Cyril Czerwonka**, Managing Director Development APAC, BWH Hotels/Best Western Hotels & Resorts**Kelvin Ip**, Director, Kland Asset Management**Tony Ryan**, Executive Chair, Trilogy Hotels and Principal, Ryan Capital Advisors**Jan Smits**, Deputy Chair & CEO APAC, Pro-invest Group

6:00pm-8:00pm

## GALA OPENING RECEPTION

A unique feature of HICAP is the opening reception hosted by Accor. Delegates from HICAP have the opportunity to meet and mingle with each other, and this promises to be a fantastic networking event.

Meets In:

**Swissotel The Stamford Executive Lounge on Level 65**

Hosted By:



## THURSDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2024

8:00am-7:45pm

Meets In:

Sponsored By:

**REGISTRATION & INFORMATION****Convention Foyer (Level 4)****TUI BLUE Hotels & Resorts**

8:30am-9:30am

Meets In:

**CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST****Fairmont Ballroom Foyer**

8:30am-5:30pm

Meets In:

Sponsored By:

**CONTINUOUS COFFEE & TEA****Fairmont Ballroom Foyer****Unifocus**

8:40am-10:30am

Meets In:

**PLENARY SESSION****Padang & Collyer**

8:40am-8:55am

Speaker:

**WELCOME REMARKS****Jonathon S. Zink**, COO, The BHN Group

8:55am-9:35am

Moderator:

**INVESTMENT INSIGHTS – FINANCIAL GURUS TELL IT LIKE IT IS!****Ling Wei Tan**, Senior Vice President, JLL's Hotels & Hospitality Group

Panelists:

**Han Khim Siew**, CEO & Executive Director, OUE REIT Management Pte Ltd**Hoe Kit Mak**, Managing Director, Lodging Private Equity Fund, CapitalLand Investment**Sonu Shivdasani**, Founder & CEO, Soneva**Angeline Tan**, Senior Vice President, SingHaiyi Hospitality**Paitoon Wongsasutthikul**, Chief Investment Officer, Asset World Corporation

9:35am-10:00am

Host:

**GLOBAL CHECK-IN****Raini Hamdi**, Business Journalist and Correspondent, Hotel Investment Today**Sébastien Bazin**, Chairman & CEO, Accor

Guest:

10:00am-10:25am

Host:

**GLOBAL CHECK-IN****Jeff Higley**, President, The BHN Group

Guest:

**Mark Hoplamazian**, President & CEO, Hyatt Hotels Corporation

10:25am-10:30am

Speaker:

**WRAP-UP REMARKS****Jonathon S. Zink**, COO, The BHN Group

10:30am-11:00am

Meets In:

**NETWORKING BREAK****Fairmont Ballroom Foyer**

11:00am-11:50am

## SESSION 05

## A SPOTLIGHT ON EAST ASIA – INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES &amp; CHALLENGES

Meets In:

Moderators:

**Canning****Charlie Macildowie**, EVP Investment Sales, Japan, JLL's Hotels & Hospitality Group

Panelists:

**Jingjing Zheng**, Project Director, Horwath HTL**Jeremy Gillet**, Chief Development Officer, Seibu Prince Hotels Worldwide Inc.**Eva Li**, Director, Westmont Hospitality Investments Asia Pte Ltd**Shunsuke Yamamoto**, Managing Director, Fortress Investment Group**Darlana Zhai**, Director of Development, Swire Hotels

## SESSION 06

## OWNERSHIP – HIGH VALUATIONS &amp; BUYER/SELLER EXPECTATION GAP

Meets In:

Moderator:

**Moor****Chariss Kok**, Vice President – Asia Pacific, HVS

Panelists:

**Paul Davis**, Of Counsel, Real Estate, Baker McKenzie

*34th edition*

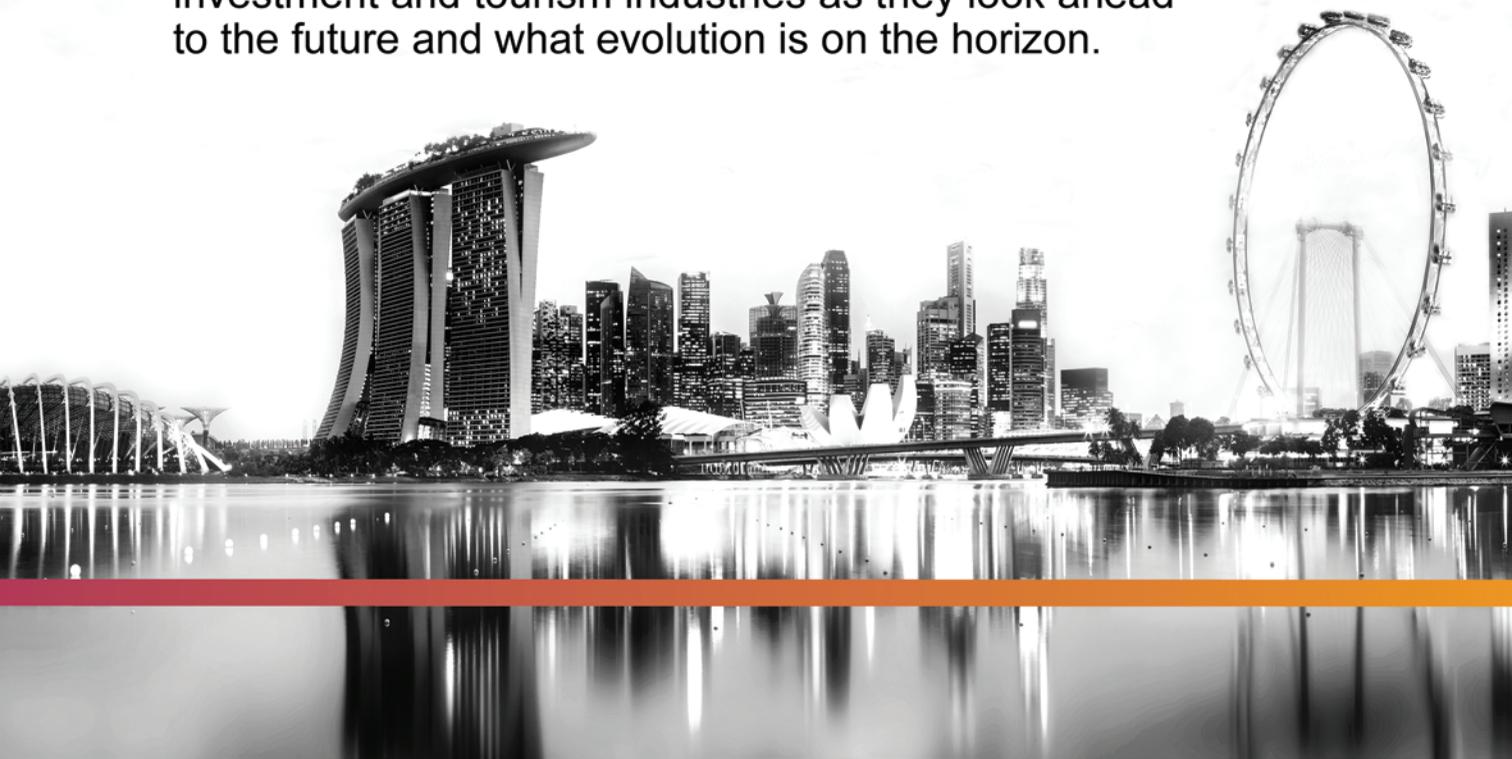
# HICAP

HOTEL INVESTMENT  
CONFERENCE ASIA PACIFIC

**16-18 OCTOBER 2024**

**FAIRMONT SINGAPORE & SWISSOTEL THE STAMFORD**

As HICAP embarks on its 34<sup>th</sup> year, the conference is as vibrant, productive, and meaningful as ever. The program and its topics are being developed with the help of the 2024 HICAP Program Planning Committee and Regional Advisors, representing leaders from the hotel and lodging industry, the investment community, and key advisors. The 2024 program will feature over 30 sessions and panels led by over 125 industry executives across all sectors of the hotel investment and tourism industries as they look ahead to the future and what evolution is on the horizon.



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**Bobby Hiranandani**, Co-Chairman, Royal Group of Companies  
**Sanjay Singh**, CEO, Fico Corporation

**SESSION 07**

**DEVELOPMENT – SUSTAINABILITY & ROI**

Meets In: **Morrison**  
 Moderator: **YouRee Park**, Senior Associate, JLL's Hotels & Hospitality Group  
 Panelists: **Olivier Berrivin**, Vice President Operations – APAC, BWH Hotels/WorldHotels  
**Eric Carbonnier**, Director of Sustainability, WATG  
**Eric Ricourte**, Founder & CEO, Greenview  
**Sonu Shivdasani**, Founder & CEO, Soneva  
**Alok K. Singh**, Global Technical Lead and Senior Industry Advisor, IFC

**SESSION 08**

**ACQUISITIONS – DISTRESSED ASSETS/ WORKOUTS**

Meets In: **Hullet**  
 Moderator: **Matt Gebbie**, Director, Pacific Asia, Horwath HTL  
 Panelists: **Mark Bullock**, Co-Founder, Ark Capital Partners  
**Christopher Hur**, CEO, Lodgis Hospitality  
**Ian Lien**, Partner & Managing Director, SC Capital Partners Group  
**Karen Wales**, Head of Hotels Australia, Transaction Services, Colliers

**12:00pm-2:15pm**

Meets In: **LUNCH & AWARDS SESSION**

1:00pm-1:10pm **WELCOME BACK**  
 Speaker: **Tony Ryan**, Executive Chair, Trilogy Hotels and Principal, Ryan Capital Advisors

**1:10pm-1:25pm**

**RISING STAR AWARD ASIA PACIFIC**

Presenters: **Andrea Belfanti**, CEO, ISHC  
**Jonathon S. Zink**, COO, The BHN Group  
 Recipient: **Stella Blythe**, Director, Hotels & Hospitality, Capital Markets, Asia, CBRE

**1:25pm-1:30pm**

**REGGIE SHIU DEVELOPMENT OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Presenter: **Regina M. DiBenedetto**, Director, Aareal Bank Asia Limited

**1:30pm-1:38pm**

**SUSTAINABLE HOTEL AWARDS**

Presenter: **Chiara Caluffetti-Lim**, Principal Studio Director Architecture, WATG

**1:38pm-1:43pm**

**SINGLE ASSET TRANSACTION OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Presenter: **Andrew MacGeoch**, Partner, Head of Asia Real Estate & Infrastructure, Global Co-Head of Hospitality & Leisure Group, BCLP

**1:43pm-2:10pm**

**LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

Host: **Leo Yen**, Friend of the Industry  
 Recipient: **Robert Hecker**, Managing Director – Pacific Asia, Horwath HTL

**2:10pm-2:15pm**

**WRAP-UP REMARKS**

Speaker: **Jonathon S. Zink**, COO, The BHN Group

**2:25pm-3:15pm**

**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**SESSION 09**

**A SPOTLIGHT ON SOUTH ASIA – INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

Meets In:  
 Moderators:

Panelists:

**Canning**

**Rohan Gopaldas**, Asset Manager & Partner, Prospect Hotel Advisors  
**Karan Mahesh**, Senior Sales Manager, Central & South Asia, STR  
**Juhi Roy**, Senior Director – Hotel Development, South Asia, Marriott International  
**Radhey S. Tawar**, Chief Commercial Officer, Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts  
**Vijay Thacker**, Partner & CEO, Crowe Advisory India and Managing Director, Horwath HTL India

**SESSION 10**

**HOTEL COMPANIES/AGREEMENTS – BRANDS, BRANDS, BRANDS**

Meets In:  
 Moderator:

**Moor**

Panelists:

**Spencer Fan**, Senior Consultant, Horwath HTL  
**Manfred Abraham**, President, Yonder Consulting  
**Damian Clowes**, Regional Managing Director, Asia Pacific, OUTRIGGER Hotels & Resorts  
**Lachlan Hoswell**, Managing Director, Australasia, Radisson Hotel Group  
**Andrew Langdon**, Chief Development Officer, Asia, Accor  
**Clarence Tan**, Senior Vice President, Development, Asia Pacific, Hilton

**SESSION 11**

**ACQUISITIONS – BANK FINANCING & THE CAPITAL STACK ‘STACKING’ UP**

Meets In:  
 Moderator:

**Morrison**

Panelists:

**Andrew Boshoff**, Chief Financial Officer, Global Hotel Alliance  
**Regina DiBenedetto**, Director, Aareal Bank Asia Limited  
**Robert Lomnitz**, Partner, Xpdite Capital Partners  
**Rohit Mohindra**, Head of Commercial Real Estate, Institutional Banking, ANZ Bank  
**Jonathan Ottevaere**, Director, APAC Hospitality, EQT | BPEA

**SESSION 12**

**OWNERSHIP – BRANDED RESIDENCES**

Meets In:  
 Moderator:

**Hullet**

Panelists:

**Bill Barnett**, Managing Director, C9 Hotelworks  
**Catherine Y. Chan**, Chief Development Officer, Hotel101 Global Pte Ltd  
**Edward Kusma**, Hotel Business Development Director, Time Merchant Capital  
**David Nguyen**, Managing Director, Indochina and Strategic Partnerships, South East Asia & Pacific, Radisson Hotel Group  
**Charles (Chas) Rubin**, Managing Director, CG Capital

**3:15pm-3:45pm**

**NETWORKING BREAK**

Meets In:

**Fairmont Ballroom Foyer**

**3:45pm-5:20pm**

**PLENARY SESSION**

Meets In:

**Padang & Collyer**

**3:45pm-3:50pm**

**WELCOME BACK**

Speaker:

**Jonathon S. Zink**, COO, The BHN Group

**3:50pm-4:20pm**

**TRAVEL, TECH, & OTAs – WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?**

Moderator:

**Siew Hoon Yeoh**, Founder & Editor, WiT Web in Travel

Panelists:

**Charline Boccara**, Vice President, ALL Brand & Marketing – Middle East, Africa, & Asia Pacific, Accor

**Boon Sian Chai**, Managing Director & VP, International Markets, Trip.com Group  
**Laura Houldsworth**, Managing Director, Asia Pacific, Booking.com

**4:20pm-4:45pm**

Host:

Guest:

**4:45pm-5:15pm**

Moderator:

Panelists:

**GLOBAL CHECK-IN**

**Raini Hamdi**, Business Journalist and Correspondent, Hotel Investment Today  
**David Moore**, President & CEO, WATG

**GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT & STRATEGY**

**Hok Yean Chee**, President – Asia Pacific, HVS  
**Jim Chu**, EVP & Chief Growth Officer, Hyatt Hotels Corporation  
**Shirley Ng**, Chief Investment Officer, UOL Group Limited  
**Agnès Roquefort**, Global Chief Development Officer, Luxury & Lifestyle, Accor

**WRAP-UP REMARKS**

**Jonathon S. Zink**, COO, The BHN Group

**NETWORKING RECEPTION**

HICAP delegates will enjoy a fabulous networking opportunity at the PARKROYAL COLLECTION Pickering, Singapore. Bus transportation will be arranged from the Swissotel The Stamford lobby at 5:30pm. Delegates will be responsible for finding their own way home or back to their hotel after this special evening.

**PARKROYAL COLLECTION Pickering Ballroom**

Meets In:

Hosted By:



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**FRIDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2024**

**7:30am-12:30pm**

Meets In:

Sponsored By:

**8:00am-9:00am**

Meets In:

**8:00am-12:30pm**

Meets In:

Sponsored By:

**9:00am-9:50am**

**REGISTRATION & INFORMATION**

**Convention Foyer (Level 4)**

**TUI BLUE Hotels & Resorts**

**CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**

**Fairmont Ballroom Foyer**

**CONTINUOUS COFFEE & TEA**

**Fairmont Ballroom Foyer**

**Unifocus**

**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**SESSION 13**

**A SPOTLIGHT ON OCEANIA – INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES**

**Canning**

Meets In:

Moderators:

**Lucia Grambalova**, CIO & Head of Asset Management, Hotel Capital Partners

**Lindy Randall**, Partner, Ashurst

Panelists:

**Valerie Foo**, Senior Vice President, Finance, Pan Pacific Hotels Group

**Rod Munro**, Managing Director – Australasia, BWH Hotels

**Daniel Yip**, Partner, High Street Holdings

**SESSION 14**

**HOTEL COMPANIES/AGREEMENTS – BRAND VALUE**

**Moor**

Meets In:

Moderator:

**Saki Wada**, Consultant, Horwath HTL Japan

Panelists:

**Hiro Abe**, Managing Director, H.A. Advisors Ltd

**Kevin Croley**, Senior Vice President, Development, Pan Pacific Hotels Group

**SESSION 15**

Meets In:

Moderator:

Panelists:

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

**DEVELOPMENT – FOOD, BEVERAGE, & ROI**

**Morrison**

**Tony Chisholm**, Vice President Food & Beverage, MEA/Asia PME, Accor

**Fabrice Blondeau**, Founder & CEO, F+B Consulting International

**Patricia Ho Douven**, Founder, White Jacket Pte Ltd

**Deepak Ohri**, Founder & CEO, LAMH Management Asia

**Rohit Sachdev**, Chief Executive Officer & Founder, Soho Hospitality

**SESSION 16**

Meets In:

Moderator:

Panelists:

**DEVELOPMENT – LUXURY**

**Hullet**

**Nitin Das Rai**, Director, Narrative Strategy, Yonder Consulting

**Craig Bond**, Senior Vice President – Head of Operations, Pan Pacific Hotels Group

**Ramzy Fenianos**, Chief Development Officer APAC, Radisson Hotel Group

**Sarah Leow**, Vice President, Development & Owner Relations, Hyatt Hotels Corporation

**Ping Mei**, Head of China, Capella Hotel Group

**NETWORKING BREAK**

**Fairmont Ballroom Foyer**

**PLENARY SESSION**

**Padang & Collyer**

**WELCOME BACK**

**Jeff Higley**, President, The BHN Group

**GLOBAL CHECK-IN**

**Nihat Ercan**, CEO, Asia Pacific, Hotels & Hospitality, JLL

**Andrew Burych**, Managing Partner, Brookfield Asset Management

**9:50am-10:25am**

Meets In:

**10:25am-12:30pm**

Meets In:

**10:25am-10:40am**

Speaker:

**10:40am-11:05am**

Host:

Guest:

**11:05am-12:00pm**

Moderator:

Panelists:

**VIEWS FROM THE BOARDROOM – ROUND TWO**

**Rob Schneider**, Managing Editor, Hotel Investment Today

**Christopher Hartley**, CEO, Global Hotel Alliance

**Rajeev Menon**, President, Asia Pacific, Marriott International

**Dillip Rajakarier**, Group CEO, Minor International and CEO, Minor Hotels

**Jeff Wagoner**, President & CEO, OUTRIGGER Hospitality Group

**Hannah Yulo-Luccini**, Chief Executive Officer, Hotel101 Global Pte Ltd

**GLOBAL CHECK-IN**

**Nihat Ercan**, CEO, Asia Pacific, Hotels & Hospitality, JLL

**Joy Sriyuksiri**, Managing Director, Dusit Estates & Group Creative Strategy, Dusit International

**12:00pm-12:25pm**

Host:

Guest:

**12:25pm-12:30pm**

Speakers:

**12:30pm**

**THANK YOU & SEE YOU SOON**

**Jeff Higley**, President, The BHN Group

**Jonathon S. Zink**, COO, The BHN Group

**HICAP ADJOURNS**

34<sup>TH</sup> Edition  
**HICAP**  
 HOTEL INVESTMENT  
 CONFERENCE ASIA PACIFIC  
 BY NORTHSTAR



16-18 October 2024  
 Fairmont Singapore &  
 Swissotel The Stamford  
[HICAPConference.com](http://HICAPConference.com)

#### HICAP 2024 PROGRAM PLANNING COMMITTEE

**Chandragupta Amritkar**, Global Features  
**Bill Barnett**, C9 Hotelworks  
**Andrea Belfanti**, ISHC  
**Stella Blythe**, CBRE  
**Glen Boulwood**, Serene Capital  
**Hok Yean Chee**, HVS  
**Peng Sum Choe**, Pan Pacific Hotels Group  
**Mandy Clarke**, Accom News  
**Richard Crawford**, Marriott International  
**Matthijs de Man**, Anantara Vacation Club  
**Paul Dean**, Dean + Associates  
**Dean Dransfield**, Dransfield Hotels & Resorts  
**Patrick Finn**, IHG Hotels & Resorts  
**Lucia Grambalova**, Hotel Capital Partners  
**Jihong He**, H World Group Limited  
**Robert Hecker**, Horwath HTL  
**Kelvin Ip**, Horwath HTL  
**Faez Jumabhoy**, Globus Holdings Limited  
**Kyu Baek Kim**, TriO Capital  
**Tasos Kousloglou**, SHKP Hotels  
**Andrew Langdon**, Accor  
**Sarah Leow**, Hyatt Hotels Corporation  
**Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**, Travel Weekly Asia  
**Serena Lim**, The Ascott Limited  
**Lee Lin**, NOBU Hospitality  
**David Ling**, CDL  
**Damien Little**, Horwath HTL  
**Andrew MacGeoch**, Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner  
**Arnaud Millecamps**, Gatehouse Hospitality  
**Rohit Mohindra**, ANZ Bank  
**Sadao Muraoka**, Mori Building Investment Advisory  
**Xander Nijjens**, JLL  
**Jonathan Ottevaere**, EQT | BPEA  
**Jesper Palmqvist**, STR  
**Sashi Rajan**, HAMA  
**Ananth Ramchandran**, CBRE PTE LTD  
**Lindy Randall**, Ashurst  
**Lada Shelkovernikova**, Watson Farley & William LLP  
**Sanjay Singh**, Fico Corporation  
**Steven Skarott**, Salter Brothers  
**Jan Smits**, Pro-Invest Group  
**John Stawyskyj**, Ashurst  
**Clarence Tan**, Hilton  
**Jeff Wagoner**, OUTRIGGER Hospitality Group  
**Karen Wales**, Colliers International  
**Jeff Weinstein**, Hotel Investment Today  
**Robert Williams**, Watson Farley & William LLP  
**Daniel Yip**, High Street Holdings

#### HICAP 2024 DEAL OF THE YEAR AWARDS COMMITTEES

**HICAP Reggie Shui Development of the Year**  
**Robert V.R. Hecker**, Horwath HTL – Chair  
**Bill Barnett**, C9 Hotelworks Co., Ltd.  
**Regina M. DiBenedetto**, Aareal Bank Asia Limited  
**Ian Lien**, SC Capital Partners Group  
**Eric Levy**, TSI  
**Xander Nijjens**, JLL

**HICAP Single Asset Transaction of the Year HICAP Merger & Acquisition of the Year**  
**Andrew MacGeoch**, BCLP – Chair  
**Stella Blythe**, CBRE  
**Hok Yean Chee**, HVS  
**Shaman Chellaram**, Colliers  
**Nihat Ercan**, JLL  
**Matt Gebbie**, Horwath HTL  
**Chris Hodgens**  
**Lada Shelkovernikova**, Watson Farley & Williams  
**Dan Voellm**, AP Hospitality Advisors

#### HICAP 2024 RISING STAR AWARD ASIA PACIFIC JUDGING PANEL

**Peng Sum Choe**, Pan Pacific Hotels Group  
**Jim Chu**, Hyatt Hotels Corporation  
**Larry Cuculic**, BWH Hotels  
**Nihat Ercan**, JLL  
**Chin Fen Eu**, Frasers Hospitality  
**Christopher Hartley**, Global Hotel Alliance  
**Jihong He**, H World International  
**Robert Hecker**, Horwath HTL  
**Gilda Perez-Alvarado**, Accor  
**Rajeev Menon**, Marriott International  
**Dillip Rajakarier**, Minor International  
**Jeff Wagoner**, OUTRIGGER Hospitality Group  
**Alan Watts**, Hilton  
**Hannah Yulo**, Hotel101 Global

#### HICAP 2024 SUSTAINABLE HOTEL AWARDS JUDGING PANEL

**Chiara Calufetti-Lim**, WATG  
**Matthew Carlisle**, Cundall  
**Lyndall DeMarco**, Only Sustainability Pty Ltd – Honorary Chair  
**Hervé Houdré**, H2 Sustainability Consulting  
**Eric Ricaurte**, Greenview (Chairman)  
**Masaru Takayama**, Asian Ecotourism Network  
**Claire Whitely**, Sustainable Hospitality Alliance



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## The Boathouse Pulau Tioman

### Warm hospitality on a secluded island



Felix Yeo

When I caught up with Michael Chua, VP Sales & Marketing, HPL Hotels & Resorts and his colleague Angeline Loh, Director of Marketing Communications in Singapore in October 2022, he mentioned about this wonderful property coming up in Pulau Tioman. His passion for it was clearly visible as he invited me to cover the property whenever it opens. “You will be the first Indian media to cover our property,” said Michael.

Keeping his word, 21 months later, I was co-ordinating with Angeline for my flights and itinerary. And what a great decision it was. On arrival early morning into Singapore, the first night I stayed at the popular Concorde Hotel and Brenda Lee-McColl and Amanda Low from the hotel were, as always, kind enough to provide me with access to Premier Club facilities. In the afternoon Michael and his team took me out for a nice south Indian lunch. Early next morning at 6 am Michael came to pick me up at Concorde Hotel. While unfortunately Angeline could not make it, Cynthia Tan from her department accompanied me and Michael.

Crossing into Malaysia the immigration was quick. Currently visa waiver is for Indian Nationals i.e., they are eligible for visa-free entry into Malaysia. But do remember Indian citizens must complete the Malaysia Digital Arrival Card (MDAC) online at least three days before their arrival date.

Arriving into Mersing Jetty earlier than scheduled, we did some local romping around the area. The resort also has a small office in Mersing where guest arriving early can keep their baggage, especially very useful for groups. At around 11:30 we boarded the

ferry to Pulau Tioman. It was a 2 hour mix of smooth and rough ride. While I was able to doze on and off, I could sense some of the girls feeling nausea. Fortunately the ferries do keep motion sickness bags.

Arriving at the jetty Michael pointed The Boathouse Pulau Tioman and it looked truly an amazing view. We had lunch and then Felix Yeo who is responsible for managing two hotels - The Boathouse Pulau Tioman and Concorde Hotel Shah Alam from HPL group took us for a show round of his wonderful property.

#### A 31-villa resort

The Boathouse Pulau Tioman, accessible only by boat, is a 31-villa resort that is inspired by nature and styled after the traditional Malay houses. The categories offered include sea view, deluxe, beachfront, beachfront family bungalows and a beachfront suite. The basic room sizes are 49 sqm with a private terrace and daybed. The family Bungalow is 69 sqm with connecting room





with a bunk bed and 2 spacious bathrooms with rain shower. The Beach House is a two-level structure comprising of two suites and one loft (2 or 3 bedrooms option). “It’s ideal for large families or groups. The private terrace with casual dining bench table is an added advantage. Guests have the flexibility to book the entire Beach House or individual units separately as per the needs,” said Felix Yeo. While I loved the rooms the beach flip flops can be extremely handy apart from the beach bag and yukata.

### Communal Hall: The MICE center

MICE is today's buzz word and Boathouse Pulau Tioman with its Communal Hall gives an opportunity for corporates to hold conferences and seminars or even commemorate corporate milestones. Guests can take in expansive views of the surrounding ocean in this cosy event space that can host up to 56 people comfortably in banquet style seating. For big groups, families a great place to hold private dinner with family and friends or celebrate a special occasion

### Sustainability

During the show round, I was pretty impressed by the major focus on sustainability by the resort. “We are located on an island gazetted as a wildlife reserve and marine park. So I believe it is our job to take special care in preserving the island's rich biological diversity and upholding indigenous heritage and culture. We are also able to generate our own potable water which you saw at our Ayer Fountains (Water Refill Stations). We encourage guests to refill their water when they need,” said Felix Yeo.

A coral reef conservation demonstration was also presented by Reef Check Malaysia enabling us to know the efforts behind how coral reefs are conserved and preserved, and what the resort is doing to be part of it.

### Recreational facilities

The resort offers a variety of recreational facilities, including traditional Malaysian games, some popular indoor English games, video games etc. Later in the evening we were involved in a resort activity involving kite making. It was quite a thrill as those who made their kites went on the beach to fly them. A few of the guests enjoyed a beach volleyball game where even the staff participated. There are also a lot of friendly cats across the resort – calm quite, restful, sleepy and who loved cuddling from guests. It was a delight.

### Gastronomy

While the food was yummy the chefs were kind enough to provide a variety of vegetarian dishes. The resort also provides hands-on cooking demonstrations including a variety of traditional Malaysian delicacies from scratch. Also on display is the time-honoured technique of tea pulling that transforms hot milk tea into a frothy, comforting drink affectionately known as teh tarik among locals. Guests can also learn the art of brewing Liberica coffee variety that thrives in Malaysia.

Facing the restaurant is the infinity pool where in the afternoons we all enjoyed swimming (a few even after a morning trek) so don't forget to carry your swimwear. Right across the pool and by the beach is the Beach Bar that refreshes swimmers and sun lovers with our signature drinks and a choice selection of beverages.

We also had the pleasure of having beach BBQ under the starlit sky. “It can be a great venue to celebrate one's special moments – anniversaries, birthdays, family get-togethers, corporate retreats or even a sunset beach wedding with a reception at the communal hall,” said Felix Yeo.

### Excursions

There are a variety of diving excursions to jungle treks and island excursions. Diving and snorkelling are the most popular. As a marine park, Pulau Tioman boasts a myriad of popular diving and snorkelling sites with countless species of fish and other marine life. More than renting out scuba and snorkelling equipment to explore nearby waters, the Dive Centre arranges diving and snorkelling expeditions to some of the best spots. The best part for many guests is that they offer PADI certification courses for every skill level.

One can take a scenic boat ride to Asah Jetty and marvel at Tioman Island's iconic twin peaks, known as the dragon horns), along the way. Guests can take a sunset cruise, a guided nature walk etc.

For the return, after being informed that our scheduled ferry had been delayed (was told that this does happen often) we departed 2 hours later than scheduled. From the resort we had a rough 10-minute private boat ride to main Kampung Genting Jetty. From here after an hour our ferry to Mersing Jetty arrived. The ferry was quite comfortable and after 2 hours we reached Mersing Jetty. Our pick up for depart to Singapore (Airport) was awaiting and we had a good drive back to the airport.

The trip was good and the company was superb. I found it an ideal destination for one to immerse oneself in rustic tranquillity, away from the hustle and bustle of one's city and just bask in the charming hospitality of the resort.



## Clean, Comfortable and Convenient



It was when my dear friend Anjana Manohar moved as the new General Manager for Country Inn & Suites by Radisson, Zirakpur that I decided it's time to visit Chandigarh after several years.

Chandigarh Capital Region (CCR) or Chandigarh Metropolitan Region (CMR), an area, which includes the union territory city of Chandigarh, and its neighboring cities of Mohali, Kharar, Zirakpur, New Chandigarh (in Punjab) and Panchkula, Pinjore, Kalka, Barwala (in Haryana), has always been a top notch location for weddings by citizens of the union territory and the shared capital of adjoining 2 states. The city boasts of all types of wedding venues, from lush marriage gardens to elegant banquet halls. Country Inn & Suites by Radisson Zirakpur, located about 25 minutes from Chandigarh International Airport is one such popular wedding and MICE destination.

For me the airport pick up was smooth and on arrival it was such a pleasure being received with a huge bouquet by a smiling Anjana Manohar, GM, Country Inn & Suites by Radisson, Zirakpur and her team. I was led to my suite where check-in formalities were completed. My suite was quite spacious and apart from all standard amenities the suites separate living room is ideal for one's business (or family) trips as the living zone can be used as a meeting space.

After freshening up I went to the restaurant to have lunch with the GM. "We offer excellent value for money and our main focus is on guest comfort, and convenience. For us the small touches and intricacies of guest experiences make a big difference," said Anjana, a GM that I have noticed over the years who gives a vision and strategic directions for the hotel as well as the employees.

She introduced me to the Executive Chef, Prashanta Nand Jha assuring me that he makes yummy dishes. And how true her statement was. Throughout my stay I had the gastronomic pleasure of trying out numerous dishes from across the country including my personal choice - Sabudana Kichidi and the chefs favourite Amritsari Kulcha. The other dishes that I relished included - Mushroom, Dahi ke Kebab, Jalapeño Cigar Rolls, Chana Masala, Moong Dal Halwa,



Prashanta Nand Jha

Hara Bhara Kabab, Subz Hyderabad Biryani, Boondi Raita, Dal Makhni, Lachha Paratha and Kesari Malai Kheer. The morning buffet breakfast spread was equally enticing.

On a round of the property along with the GM, I was informed that the hotel has 66 hotel rooms and suites in three categories - Superior Room - 284 ft<sup>2</sup>, Deluxe Room - 345 ft<sup>2</sup> and Suite - 501-568 ft<sup>2</sup>. "Suites are quite popular among families as it provides additional space, including a separate living room. Corporate guests appreciate it as the living space converts into meeting space. For groups who need triple occupancy, we provide a rollaway bed," said Anjana. The hotel also has sparkling outdoor pool and a well-equipped fitness center.

The hotel has outstanding facilities for MICE and marriage celebration. If one is meeting with coworkers or clients, they have exclusive boardroom for small conferences. For large events, receptions, get together, corporate meetings (up to 400 attendees) they have a huge banquet hall. The pre-function space provides the perfect venue for guests to mingle. "The evolving landscape of event spaces makes us also concentrate on this segment. As our chefs really go the extra mile to provide exceptional cuisine we are quite popular destination for MICE and weddings," said an elated Anjana.

For tourists it can be an ideal starting point to explore things in and around Zirakpur, especially for a family outing to nearby attractions. These include Chhatbir Zoo, Thunder Zone (amusement and water park), Government Museum and Art Gallery, Sukhna Lake (man-made reservoir), Zakir Hussain Rose Garden, Paras Downtown Square (shopping center), Elante Mall etc.



Anjana Manohar



Radisson Group has good presence in Chandigarh – four properties namely Radisson RED Chandigarh Mohali, Country Inn & Suites by Radisson Zirakpur, Radisson Hotel Chandigarh Zirakpur, Park Plaza Chandigarh Zirakpur. Each unique in its own way – Radisson RED Chandigarh Mohali, the first Radisson RED in India and I found it quite unique and vibrant. Park Plaza, Chandigarh with its energetic and innovative GM Sharad Sharma has one of the largest event spaces in the city.

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## SRM IHM: Providing global hospitality management careers

While SRM University is renowned globally for churning out some of the best engineers and technocrats, its Institute of Hotel and Catering Management is stirring a multitude of ardent aspiring hoteliers



Established in the year 1993, SRM Institute of Hotel Management or SRM IHM now in its 4th decade is recognised as one of the Best Hotel Management Institutes in India. Accredited by HLACTION & Certified by WACS & IAO SRM Institute of Hotel Management, a part of SRM premiere educational group, their numerous hospitality courses today have global recognition. Some of their most popular courses include Diploma (Diploma in Hotel Management and Catering Science program), Undergraduate (B.Sc. program in Hotel Management), PG Diploma (PG Diploma in Culinary Arts).

### B.Sc. (Hotel & Catering Management)

SRM IHM offers one of the best hospitality management courses in the country and is considered by the industry to be strongest and relevant in today's dynamic world of hospitality.

Basically a three years intensive programme it exposes the student to the diversity of hospitality industry and equips the student with intellectual & leadership capabilities allowing the student to move into diverse managerial roles in prestigious international organisations. Its multi-disciplinary programme focuses on critical analysis of management styles & strategic thinking required to succeed in hotel management.

The programme is based on a modern, relevant updated curriculum – and SRM believes that graduates' academic qualification should demonstrate their excellence in both hospitality and academics. The curriculum prepares students to take on management and strategic roles in the hotel and travel industries as well as exciting global hospitality management careers be it in luxury, finance, retail and all other sectors where customer relationship is key.

Some of the major topics covered include Applied Learning (Hands-on experience in all the functions of the hospitality industry, research, sessions with top industry leaders from the hospitality and service industries), Operational concepts (Decision making skills to help the student deal with day-to-day operational

challenges), Managerial Skills (Management theories & concepts, interaction with industry experts to give context & clarity on management skills Semester), Research & Strategy.

### Short-term training courses

SRM IHM has been established with the primary goal of bridging the divide between the hotel industry and human resources. In order to enhance the calibre of the students apart from the curriculum SRM IHM are spreading the wings by encouraging international and national recognized speakers to edify the student's skill. With this in mind, SRM IHM has arranged a number of short-term training courses.

Bartending Classes - Every Year SRM IHM furnish the students by bringing professionals from the field of bartending, they are also introduced to short term courses for juggling and mixology, Soft Skill - Grooming Training Program, Food Production Training Program, Foreign Language Training Program



### ALMA VIVA

SRM IHM is in collaboration with ALMA, the International School of Italian Cuisine

### SRM Hotel Pvt Ltd

SRM Hotel Pvt Ltd is one of the leading hotel chains in South India that aims to create a value-driven experience for guests with unparalleled standards of hospitality. The rooms are elegantly crafted with graceful interiors, emanating opulence and class. Spread across different major cities of South India, our chain of hotels is one of the pioneers of the hospitality sector in Tamil Nadu. Hotels in Chennai, Tuticorin and Tiruchirappalli are an effort to bring unmatched leisure and comfort to all guests, from globetrotting travellers to corporate clients.

SRM Hotel Pvt Ltd - Maraimalai Nagar, Chennai, adjacent to the college, is a spaciouly laid out hospitality establishment on National Highway 45 or the G.S.T. road. The hotel is situated amidst the industrial complexes of renowned automobile companies like BMW, Ford and Renault and offers easy access to IT companies like Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Tafe, B. Braun in Mahindra World City and Daimler India's state-of-the-art test track in Oragadam.



ALMA – The International School of Italian Cuisine – has its headquarters in the ducal palace of Colorno (Parma) and is a leading center for education and training in Italian cuisine, pastry and sommelierie, known all over the

world. The School teaches the students to become great cooks and ambassadors of the gastronomy and cuisine in Italy and all over the world. The SRM IHM a pioneer in delivering quality hospitality education for more than 2 decades had signed a memorandum of understanding with ALMA to exchange culinary knowledge among students and faculty. As a Part of MOU, SRM Hotel Management institute had received Personal invitation to attend ALMA VIVA Workshop held at Colorno.

ALMA VIVA is a yearly Food Festival celebration for Italian Cuisine with Meetings, Demonstrations and Cultural Gastronomic Events, involving cooks, teachers, students, journalists, institutions and companies that support its activity in Italy and in the world.

### SRM IHM 2024 COURSES

- B. Sc. In Hotel & Catering Management
- B. Sc. In Hospitality & Hotel Administration
- Diploma in Hotel & Catering Science
- Craftsmanship Course in Food
- PG Diploma

As a Part of the Workshop Dr. D.Antony Ashok Kumar, Director SRM IHM presented Indian Cuisine, Culture and about SRM Hotel Management to the global platform.



### Internship

Industrial Exposure Training (IET) is a unique element of SRM Institute of Hotel Management, assisting in the refinement and polishing of the personality qualities that the industry seeks in students once they complete their degree. The programme is provided in the third or fourth semester for a period of 4 months, seamlessly integrated into the curriculum, strengthening their conviction in having selected the appropriate career in the hospitality sector, and in selecting the areas of specialty that the profession provides.

The students are motivated to excel in their chosen path by their live exposure to the industry when they work as ancillary staff alongside experienced regular employees of the hotel, whether in Food production, Food and Beverage Service, Front office, and Housekeeping, as the case may be. The daily stipend for miscellaneous expenses is an added bonus to the learning process.

The SRM Institute of Hotel Management's partner hotels in the IET are among the best in the industry, providing with a one-of-a-kind opportunity to gain valuable insights into critical aspects such as organisational behaviour, working culture, time management and scheduling, inter-departmental communications, and stress management. It's no surprise that students see IET as the foundation of their careers.

"Our Internship (Summer/ Winter) programmes are quite popular. We collaborate with major universities worldwide in order to provide students with global visibility. We train our students to compete on a global scale. As a result, our students are able to secure 100% placement for the summer/winter internships with leading hospitality brands," said Dr. N. Venkata Sastry, Director - Career Centre, SRM Institute Of Science & Technology.

### Placement

The qualified students of SRM –IHM in Degree/ Diploma/ Craft get good employment and job opportunities in the Hotels, Restaurants, Industrial Catering Establishments, Airlines and Shipping and Railway Catering/ hospitals/ Guest-Houses/ Catering Institutes, retail sectors etc. through campus recruitment.

"Many students have already gone abroad for advanced training in Catering Technology and Hotel Management as well as on good foreign placements. The added advantage of the institution is to endeavours placement to every successful student at the entry level in the rank of Assistant Manager with a suitable remuneration package plus liberal perks in the SRM chain of Hotels, run by the SRM group. We also help students to enhance their Soft Skills; People Management and Entrepreneur Development Skills that help honing their abilities of getting best placements at the desirable level. Regular Counselling; Personality Development Training Programmes; Workshops; Seminars and Industry Guest Interactions are conducted to understand the students and also help them prepare for their final placements. SRM- IHM has a record of 100% placement for the past two decades," said Dr. N. Venkata Sastry.



 <b>NAAC</b> A++	  <b>UGC</b> University Grants Commission <b>Category 1</b> with 12B Status	 <b>nirf</b> NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL RANKING FRAMEWORK <b>(2024)</b> 12 <sup>th</sup> Ranked University	 <b>QS</b> <b>(2025) World Ranking</b> one among 46 Indian Universities	 <b>THE</b> <b>WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS</b> <b>(2024) World Ranking</b> one among 91 Indian Universities	 <b>QS 4★ RATING</b> <b>VERY GOOD</b> QS 4 Star Rated Globally	 <b>SHANGHAI RANKING</b> <b>(2024) World Ranking</b> Ranked 5-7 in Indian Universities
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## MKTE 2024 Delivers a Winning Showcase



MKTE is a Pan African trade fair organized and hosted by Kenya Tourism Board annually which is fast developing into a leading tourism global event feels **Pooja Amritkar** after visiting the event

The Magical Kenya Travel Expo (MKTE), Africa's premium travel trade show is a journey into the heart of Kenya's tourism industry and a celebration of the country's rich cultural heritage. The 14th edition was held recently at the Uhuru Gardens National Monument and Museum in Nairobi, brought together over 300 exhibitors and 4,000 delegates. These three days gave visitors a chance to immerse themselves in the vibrant world of Africa, connect with professionals and decision-makers, discover new opportunities, attend seminars and educational sessions, drive conversations on sustainability and eco-tourism, and experience the rich tapestry of Kenya's culture and hospitality.

MKTE 2024 brought together travel professionals from all over the world and attracted over 4,000 delegates including 180 top-quality buyers across Kenya's source markets, such as Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America, and Asia. Travel agents, tour operators, media representatives, and travel enthusiasts filled the venue, reinforcing MKTE's position as the leading tourism trade platform in East and Central Africa.

"We are making impressive strides in making this show a premier tourism showcase in Africa as we continue to adopt new innovations to resonate with the ever-dynamic tourism environment," said KTB CEO June Chepkemei.

### A Gathering of Innovators & Exhibitors

One of the standout features of the expo was its commitment to showcasing the latest trends and unique experiences in African tourism. From stunning coastlines in Diani to thrilling wildlife adventures in the Mara, every facet of the tourism industry was represented. The diverse range of exhibitors included tourism boards, county governments, hospitality brands, technology providers, travel agencies, tour operators, wildlife safari camps, and cultural organizations, all eager to share their stories and services.

Many exhibitors emphasized the importance of responsible travel while providing authentic, unforgettable experiences for tourists. The expo featured participation from tourism boards such as South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Malawi, and Seychelles. As well as the county representatives from Turkana,

Lamu, Makueni, Kwale, Kilifi, Bungoma and Machakos. Prominent airlines included Kenya Airways, Jumbojet Limited, Air Kenya, Air Tanzania, Auric Air, Air Asia, Flightlink, and AMREF Flying Doctors, each offering a wide range of services that connect travelers across Africa and beyond. Kenya Airways is the flagship airline known for its extensive international and regional routes while Jumbojet Limited and Air Kenya focus on domestic flights, making it easier to explore Kenya. AMREF Flying Doctors provide air ambulance services and have successfully evacuated patients from challenging zones.

Premium hospitality brands from East Africa were present to showcase their luxurious accommodations, catering to all types of travel experiences, especially focusing on the Indian market. From beachfront resorts to safari lodges, their offerings reflect the diverse landscapes and cultures of Africa. Some of the exhibitors included: Sarovar Hotels, Sentrim Hotels & Resorts, Silverpalm Spa & Resort, Karibu Camps & Lodges, Serena Hotels, JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge, Prideinn Hotels, Diamonds Hotels and Resorts, Saruni Basecamp, Movenpick Hotels, The Concord Hotel & Suites, Zanzibar Collection, Emara Ole Sereni Hotel, AirCasa Limited.

Leading tour operators focused on tailored packages to meet every traveler's needs and budgets while exploring breathtaking views and exceptional adventures. Some of them included: Blueberry Voyages, Coral Spirit, Go Places, Kipruto Safaris, Pinnacle Africa, Pollman's Tours & Safaris, Satguru Travel, Sense of Africa, Think Travels, Viuttravel, Gaint Gorilla Safaris, and more.

### Networking Opportunities Abound

MKTE provided an unparalleled platform for networking, where everyone has the opportunity to engage with industry leaders and decision-makers across the globe. The atmosphere buzzed with conversations about future collaborations, innovative marketing strategies, and ways to enhance travel experiences that could redefine East Africa's tourism landscape.

What stood out most was the willingness of exhibitors and attendees to share their knowledge and expertise, discuss

industry trends, and explore new projects. India, in particular, is a significant market for Africa, and this gathering highlighted the potential to forge long-term partnerships that expand networks and understanding of Kenya's dynamic tourism landscape.

Additionally, the expo featured several panel discussions that addressed pressing issues within the tourism sector. Topics included the impact of technology on travel, the importance of sustainable practices, digital nomadism and sports tourism, wildlife conservation, and strategies for attracting a diverse range of travelers.

### Cultural Experiences

The expo presented many cultural performances that demonstrated the lively traditions of Africa. Dancers adorned in traditional attire performed energetic routines at the South Africa



Tourism Board stand, Masai Mara artisans demonstrated their handmade crafts such as beaded jewelry and Masai blankets. The Association of Uganda Tour Operators offered attendees a unique opportunity to

sample their famous local gin - Uganda Waragi, and Kenya Airways hosted an exclusive inflight production selection event where everyone could sample their selection of wines, spirits, and meals. It's a beautiful reminder that every travel destination has its own rich history, unique adventures, and experiences that are waiting to be explored.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

#### Kenya Announces Digital Nomad Work Permit and Transit ETA:

Kenya is making big strides in welcoming digital nomads and long-haul travelers with new initiatives aimed at boosting tourism. At the event, President William Ruto emphasized the country's tourism growth efforts, with plans to improve infrastructure, promote cultural tourism, and position Kenya as a top destination for MICE.

"The programs are aimed at complementing the visa-free policy by the government with the Digital Nomad Work Permit targeting global digital professionals looking to live and work in Kenya. On the other hand, the Transit and Long Connection Travelers (ETA) will enable transit visitors to immerse themselves in Magical Kenya instead of waiting at the terminals," said President Ruto.

Transit travelers can simply step out of the airport and enjoy what Nairobi has to offer. They can visit the renowned Nairobi National Park to see black rhinoceros in their natural habitat or visit the Giraffe Center and have a unique experience of feeding giraffes. They can also visit the nearby shopping malls or museums. Every aspect is tailored to make the stay enjoyable and memorable.

#### Kenya's Vision for Sustainable Tourism and Remote Work

A key takeaway from MKTE 2024 was Kenya's leadership

in sustainable tourism. KTB CEO June Chepkemei talked to local and international media to highlight the country's ongoing efforts to promote responsible travel and conservation, ensuring that tourism development does not come at the expense of the environment or local communities. Introducing the "One Tourist, One Tree" campaign, this initiative encourages every visitor to Kenya to plant a tree when they visit to help enhance the country's biodiversity and offset their carbon footprints.

She also highlighted the introduction of a digital nomad work permit, aimed at establishing Kenya as a prime destination for remote workers. This initiative emphasizes the availability of coworking spaces and reliable internet connectivity, making it easier for digital nomads to work while enjoying the beautiful landscapes of Kenya. The government is focusing on partnerships and modernization to attract over 5 million annual visitors by 2027.



#### AirAsia X and Kenya Tourism Board announce direct flights between Nairobi and Kuala Lumpur:

In an exciting move to boost tourism between Asia and Africa, AirAsia X (AAX) announced its partnership with the Kenya Tourism Board. This launch of AAX's new direct flights from Kuala Lumpur to Nairobi, beginning on November 15, 2024, with four weekly flights, focuses on joint marketing efforts to enhance connectivity and attract tourists from both regions. This new route also provides seamless access to Asia, particularly Malaysia's vibrant attractions, as part of the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign.

Benyamin Ismail, CEO of AirAsia X said: "We are excited to launch our new direct route to Nairobi next month. This is a major milestone in our mission to connect Asia with Africa and opens up a world of travel possibilities between the two continents."

June Chepkemei, CEO of Kenya Tourism Board said: "This enhanced connectivity will stimulate economic growth and create new opportunities for local businesses, showcasing Kenya as a key destination for global travelers, especially from Asia."

#### An Experience to Remember

The event provided a unique platform for everyone in the travel and tourism industry to connect, learn, and experience the best of what East Africa has to offer.

MKTE is more than just an opportunity to expand business—it's a chance to immerse in the essence of Kenya, a country that has so much to offer the world. From the surreal wildlife sightings in the Maasai Mara to the stunning water adventures in Diani, one can witness the incredible diversity in Kenya as it continues to welcome travellers from around the globe.

# Harnessing AI to Fight Global Deforestation

The new European Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) is intended to prevent goods marketed in the EU from contributing to the spread of deforestation. When a wood product is brought into the EU market, for example, there must be documentation of which types of wood were used to produce it, along with proof of their legal origin. Depending on the material, even the initial review of the declared type of wood is no easy task. Paper, for example, requires time-consuming examination by specialists. Now, a new AI-based analytical tool for determining wood types is being developed to simplify and accelerate this process. Researchers from the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Mathematics ITWM are working closely with the Thünen Institute of Wood Research to develop the automated image recognition system for large-scale review of declarations of wood type.

Microscopic image of various types of wood fibers, automatically identified by genus

Illegal logging is one of the consequences of rising global demand for lumber. The European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR), the predecessor of the EUDR, entered into force back in 2013 with the aim of curbing the unlawful use of wood. Since then, commercial enterprises have been required to document the types of wood used in their products and their origins, thereby demonstrating the legal origins of the wood used in goods they import into the EU market. The same applies to wood products such as particle board, fiberboard, paper, and cardboard. But how can the types of wood used in fiber materials be identified without a doubt?

As things currently stand, responsibility for examining wood products falls to people such as the employees of the Thünen Institute, a research institute in the

portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL). They receive numerous product samples from industry and government agencies so they can check the types of wood used — and the numbers are rising. The samples are then sent for expert analysis under a microscope, which is an extremely time-consuming process. With paper and fiberboard, the wood cells are separated from the material, dyed and then prepared on a slide. The cells can then be classified based on their appearance when viewed through a microscope. But because this preparation and examination process is so time-consuming and more and more samples are coming in for testing, the specialists can only handle a limited number of expert reports. A new AI-based analytical tool is being developed to help with this situation by relieving

some of the workload on highly qualified experts, accelerating and automating the examination process, and enabling fast, efficient controls. Researchers from Fraunhofer ITWM and the Thünen Institute of Wood Research in Hamburg have teamed up in the KI\_Wood-ID project, using machine learning to develop the new automated image recognition system to identify types of wood. The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL).



Dr. Stephanie Helmling from the Thünen Institute uses a microscope to examine samples. © Thünen Institute

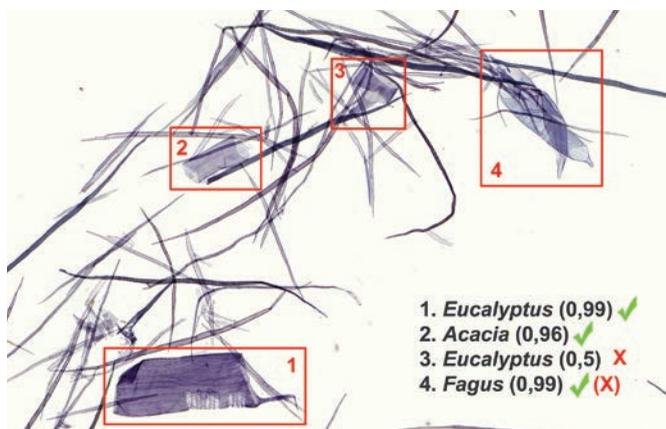
## Algorithms to curb the illegal lumber trade

The researchers' first area of focus in the project is hardwoods, especially those originating from plantations grown worldwide for cellulose production. Artificial intelligence can be used to determine the type of wood based on

vascular tissue, which varies in cell structure, shape, and size. Using reference preparations from the Thünen Institute's vast collection of wood samples, the researchers from Fraunhofer ITWM are training neural networks until the AI is capable of independently identifying and classifying the characteristic features of particular species so it can detect the types of wood present in the microscopic image of an unknown sample.

## Preventing deforestation around the world

An initial prototype of the analysis system has been trained on reference samples to the point that it can already identify eleven types of hardwood. The next step will involve identifying softwood. The prototype, which features a graphical user interface (GUI), is initially available to the Thünen Institute. In the long term, the AI-based image recognition tool is to be rolled out to support testing labs and government agencies worldwide in monitoring the international wood trade. "Ultimately, deforestation and the illegal timber trade can only be prevented at the global level, so we hope testing organizations that are approved worldwide will be able to benefit from our system in the future," Stephani says.



Microscopic image of various types of wood fibers, automatically identified by genus.

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