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- HITS, Chennai
- Quantum Science
- Medi Tech
- Gokulam Grand
- Cyber Tech
- Mauritius
- Villa Maya



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
Quantum Science
and Technology



Empowering Readers: Our Most Precious Asset



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TRIVANDRUM



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KUMARAKOM

GATEWAY TO TIMELESS HOSPITALITY



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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

How can surgery be made more cost-effective, safer and more efficient in the future? An interdisciplinary French-German team has developed high-tech hybrid operating rooms that harness the power of 5G and AI to unlock whole new applications. A few short years from now, surgeons might be able to operate on patients remotely, with support from a robot with haptic feedback. The hospital would operate its own 5G network, ensuring low-latency connections to exchange data continuously during the operation. Researchers worked on these and other scenarios in the 5G-OR (Establishing the next generation of a 5G-enabled operating room ecosystem to improve patient outcome) project, which has just concluded.

Cyberattacks have become a major risk for companies and other organizations. To prevent data theft, sabotage and extortion, many companies and government agencies are turning in response to Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) systems, which use detection rules, also known as signatures, to identify cyberattacks. However, researchers at the Fraunhofer Institute for Communication, Information Processing and Ergonomics FKIE have conducted extensive tests and concluded that it is easy for attackers to evade many signatures like these. AMIDES, a new open source system from Fraunhofer FKIE, is designed to help remedy the situation. It uses AI to identify attacks that traditional signatures miss.

The year 2024 saw the emergence of several important real-world use cases of quantum computing and the UN proclaiming that 2025 will be the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology is very timely.

Quantum computing leverages the unusual properties of particles when observed at the sub-atomic level, such as superposition and entanglement, to carry out certain computational tasks hundreds of millions of times more quickly than traditional computers. Experts predict that it will revolutionize many fields, including climate modelling, material discovery, genomics, clean energy, profoundly affect the evolution of AI, natural language processing, autonomous driving and computer vision applications at unprecedented speed.

The mission of the International Year of Quantum Science & Technology (IYQ) is to use the occasion of 100 years of quantum mechanics in 2025 to help raise public awareness of the importance and impact of quantum science and applications on all aspects of life.

Starting as one of the best aviation institutes in India and run by the prestigious Hindustan Group of Institutions, today the group offers an impressive array of multidisciplinary programs. We had the pleasure of spending quality time with Dr. Anand Jacob Verghese, Chancellor - Hindustan Institute of Technology & Science and Chairman - Hindustan Group of Institutions and getting more insights on the institutions run by him and the educational system in general. We are carrying this in depth interview in two parts.

Mauritius is often described as a tropical destination, and it is easy to see why. White sandy beaches, turquoise waters, and breathtaking sunsets lure travellers from across the globe, but there is much more to this island than meets the eye.

One of the best times to visit Mauritius is in December, not only because of the perfect weather and Christmas decorations all around but also because of the vibrant International Kreol Festival. It's an experience like no other and on this December, from 12th to 22nd, the island was alive with the sounds, colours, traditions, dance, and flavours of Creole culture. The theme for this year was Kreolite boté nou mauricianisme – Creolity, the beauty of our Mauritianism. The celebration is a unique opportunity for locals and tourists to connect with the heart of Mauritius, the soul of its people, and the beauty of its shared history.

Nestled in the heart of Trivandrum, Kerala, Villa Maya is an award-winning restaurant. The lush gardens, water features, and heritage architecture provide a refreshing environment, encouraging creativity, collaboration, and relaxation. Guests can savour award-winning dishes while enjoying the enchanting ambiance of its indoor halls or lush outdoor settings. Headed by Sashi Jacob, VP, MPG Group, a visionary leader, in a tête-à-tête with our Editor he highlights how Villa Maya is unique.



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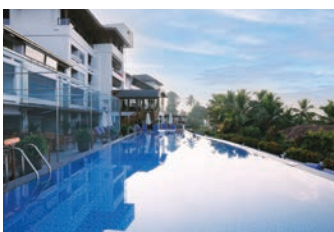


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AMIDES Detects New Varieties of Cyberattacks

Cyberattacks have become a major risk for companies and other organizations. To prevent data theft, sabotage and extortion, many companies and government agencies are turning in response to Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) systems, which use detection rules, also known as signatures, to identify cyberattacks. However, researchers at the Fraunhofer Institute for Communication, Information Processing and Ergonomics FKIE have conducted extensive tests and concluded that it is easy for attackers to evade many signatures like these. AMIDES, a new open source system from Fraunhofer FKIE, is designed to help remedy the situation. It uses AI to identify attacks that traditional signatures miss.

The threat of cyberattacks and industrial espionage has risen further in 2024. According to a study by the Bitkom digital association, eight out of ten companies in Germany have fallen victim to data theft and similar attacks. The damage done by network intrusions runs into the billions of euros. But the issue is that the nature of the attacks and the methods used to carry them out are constantly in flux, with attackers often making only minor changes to evade detection. The end result is that theft and tampering often go unnoticed until it is too late.

Open source system detects signature evasion through adaptive misuse detection

So far, detection of cyberattacks at organizations has been based primarily on signatures, written by security experts on the basis of known attacks. These signatures are the centerpiece of a SIEM system. However, researchers at Fraunhofer FKIE in Bonn have discovered that it is easy for attackers to circumvent many signatures of this kind. Though methods from a related area called anomaly detection can be used as an alternative to identify attacks in spite of signature evasions, this approach frequently yields large numbers of false alarms — so many, in fact, that not all of them can even be investigated. To solve this problem, the researchers at Fraunhofer FKIE set out to strike a practical balance, developing a system that relies on machine learning to identify attacks that are similar to existing signatures, but do not exactly match them. Their solution, Adaptive Misuse Detection System (AMIDES), utilizes supervised machine learning to identify potential rule evasions while at the same time minimizing false alarms. The freely available open source software (see link below) is aimed primarily at larger organizations that already have central security monitoring systems and structures in place and are now looking to improve them.

“Signatures are the most important way to detect cyberattacks in enterprise networks, but they are not a magic bullet,” says Rafael Uetz, a researcher at Fraunhofer FKIE and the head of the Intrusion Detection and Analysis research group. “Malicious activity can often be carried out undetected by slightly modifying the attack. Adversaries use various techniques to disguise what they are doing and evade detection, such as inserting dummy characters into command lines. The attacker writes their command specifically so the signature doesn’t find it,” he says, explaining the tactics employed by cybercriminals. This is where AMIDES comes in: The software extracts features from security-related events, such as the command line of newly launched programs. Machine learning is then used to identify command lines that are similar to those matching the detection rules but are not matching exactly. AMIDES would trigger an alarm in this case. The

authors call this approach adaptive misuse detection because it adapts to the target environment by first being trained in how the environment normally behaves so it can correctly tell potential attacks apart from harmless events.

Adaptive misuse detection permits rule attribution

Along with the option to initiate warnings of potential evasion, the new approach also offers a function the researchers are calling rule attribution.

When a conventional rule is triggered to detect misuse, an analyst can simply display the rule to find out what has happened, as rules normally contain a meaningful title and a description in addition to the signatures. But many systems based on machine learning lack this advantage, instead merely generating a warning without further context. Since adaptive misuse detection learns from SIEM detection rules, information on which features are contained in which rules is available during training, allowing AMIDES to gauge which rules are likely to have been evaded.

AMIDES has already been evaluated through extensive testing using real-world data from a German government agency. Uetz comments: “These tests showed that our solution has the potential to significantly improve detection of network intrusions.” Set to its default level of sensitivity, AMIDES succeeded in identifying 70 percent of evasion attempts — without triggering false alarms. As far as speed is concerned, the measurements show that the system is fast enough for live operation, even in very large enterprise networks.



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Researchers at Fraunhofer FKIE have developed AMIDES, a solution with the potential to significantly improve detection of network intrusions.

“We have signed over 150 MoUs with institutions and corporations, globally”



Starting as one of the best aviation institutes in India and run by the prestigious Hindustan Group of Institutions, today the group offers an impressive array of multidisciplinary programs. I had the pleasure of spending quality time with **Dr. Anand Jacob Verghese, Chancellor - Hindustan Institute of Technology & Science and Chairman - Hindustan Group of Institutions** and getting more insights on the institutions run by him and the educational system in general. We are carrying this in depth interview in two parts. **Excerpts**

How did the concept of starting an educational institution originate?

The origin of our educational institution is rooted in a profound vision of our founder Chairman, Dr. K.C.G. Verghese, who firmly believed that education is not merely about academic learning, but about creating opportunities for individuals to rise above their circumstances and realize their full potential.

In the early days, our founder was deeply concerned about the limited access to quality education, particularly for marginalized and economically disadvantaged communities. He observed that education was the most powerful tool for social mobility, but it remained out of reach for many. This realization sparked a passionate commitment to create an educational ecosystem that would break down barriers and provide comprehensive learning opportunities.

The concept emerged during a time of significant social and economic challenges. Our founder believed that education should not be a privilege for a select few, but a fundamental right for everyone. He was inspired by the transformative power of knowledge – how it could change individual lives, strengthen communities, and contribute to national development.

Key principles that guided the institution's establishment included inclusive world-class education, holistic development of students, emphasis on practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge, creating pathways for students from all backgrounds and fostering innovation and critical thinking.

The motto "To Make Every Man a Success and No Man a Failure" was not just a slogan, but a deeply held philosophy. It reflected a radical approach to education that saw potential in every individual, regardless of their social, economic, or cultural background.

Initially started with limited resources but unlimited passion, the institution began as a small training institute-HIET. Over time, it grew through the dedication of its founder, leaders, teachers, and

the communities it served. Each success story and each student who transformed their life through education became a testament to the founding vision.

Today, our institution stands as a living embodiment of those original dreams – a place where education is a powerful instrument of personal and social transformation, continuing to break barriers and create opportunities for generations of learners.

What are the core strengths of your University?

Our university is built on a multifaceted approach towards holistic education that extends far beyond traditional academic boundaries. Our core philosophy looks towards nurturing not just the academic and intellectual capabilities of individuals, but also the hidden potential of each student.



Academic and research excellence form the cornerstones of our institutional strength. Our world-class faculty, comprising seasoned researchers, world-class scientists, academicians and industry experts, bring a wealth of knowledge and practical experience to the classroom. Five of our faculty members even featured in the top 2% scientist's worldwide survey conducted by Stanford.

The industry-integrated curriculum, designed by industry leaders including IBM, GARC, LSC and more, is meticulously designed to be both cutting-edge and adaptable, ensuring students receive education that is globally competitive and is applicable in real-world scenarios. We also offer dedicated research centers, seed funding for innovative projects, and robust support for patents and publications to encourage students and faculty alike. HITS is credited with over 5200+ publications in Scopus and H-Index; 24,000+ citations and 120 credited patents.

We strongly believe in the concept of industry-academia interactions and have forged robust collaborations with leading corporations and organizations, creating an ecosystem where academic learning seamlessly integrates with professional requirements. Mandatory internship programs, industry-designed



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Certification Capabilities :



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coursework/programs, industry established labs powered by IBM/Q-Max and regular talks and workshops by corporate leaders ensure that our students are not just academically prepared, but professionally equipped to face the challenges of competitive job markets globally.

The student-centric environment that recognizes and nurtures individual potential remains our most distinguishing feature. Our comprehensive support system includes personalized mentorship, experiential learning, student counselling services and scholarship programs.

Technology and infrastructure play a crucial role in our educational model. State-of-the-art labs, advanced digital platforms, modern research centers of excellence, well-stocked digital library and technology-enabled classrooms create an environment that promotes innovative learning. Our university's state-of-the-art aviation campus also has hangars with Cessna Planes and Chetak Helicopters to provide real-world training.

We have signed over 150 MoUs with institutions and corporations, globally. Key collaborators include Cranfield University (UK), Dongguk University (South Korea), Airbus (Europe), Boeing (US), and Moscow Aviation Institute (Russia). This global exposure includes International exchange programs, multicultural campus, foreign language learning and collaborative research opportunities that prepare our students to be global citizens.

Perhaps most importantly, we remain committed to social transformation and empowerment. Our education goes beyond academic and professional skills, focusing on developing responsible global citizens. Our commitment towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encourages community engagement programs, sustainability initiatives, research on clean energy/hydrogen tech, green campus bolstered by solar panels and bio gas plants and value-based education to ensure that our students understand their broader societal and environmental responsibilities.



These core strengths are not just institutional attributes but a reflection of our fundamental belief: education is a transformative journey that empowers individuals to create meaningful change in the world.

Any Unique Courses that you would like to highlight?

HITS offers an impressive array of multidisciplinary programs that stand out in the educational landscape. Our flagship programs include Aeronautical Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, Computer Science Engineering and Management that provide cutting-edge training to aspiring leaders and innovators in their respective field.

We also offer unique programs that are at the forefront of innovation and industry relevance including Digital Manufacturing, Smart Grid and Electric Vehicles, Microelectronics, and VLSI Design. These programs are designed to meet the demands of industries such as semiconductors, electronics, and automation.

We are at the forefront of emerging fields with programs in machine learning, IoT, Cloud Computing, Block Chain, Cyber Security, Defence Technologies, Urban Planning and FinTech, which align with current industry demands.

The university has strategic partnerships that enhance its offerings, such as aviation services and air cargo and logistics programs in collaboration with Logistics Sector Skill Council, IBM Collaborated CSE and Business Analytics programs, Health Management program with Sankara Nethralaya, IMAX and Kavery Hospital collaborated customized health science programs and smart mobility initiatives with GARC. These programs deliver industry-specific expertise/training and students are career-ready.

With a goal towards catering to diverse interests and providing students with opportunities to pursue specialized careers, we also offer unique programs in Sports Management, Communication Design, Industrial Design, User Experience Design, Food Technology, Transportation Planning and Public Administration. The inclusion of Christian Studies in the curriculum fosters spiritual growth and ethical values, complementing the academic and professional development of students.

These diverse and targeted programs demonstrate HITS' commitment to preparing students for emerging and specialized career paths in various high-growth sectors.

With your vast experience, how do you see the changes in our Indian education system, especially higher education?

The Indian Higher Education system has undergone a significant change in the last two decades. Driven by technological advancements, global competitiveness, changing workforce demands and the challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic, higher education today has become more flexible, accessible and dynamic.





While COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online and hybrid learning models, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) further supported this trend. With a need to improve access to quality education, especially in remote and underserved areas, online learning has emerged as a powerful tool. Use of online platforms and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) has further bridged the geographical divide, providing equal opportunities to learners across the country.

There has been a marked shift from traditional theoretical learning to more practical, skill-based education. Our modern education ecosystem encourages multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary learning that hones versatile skill sets that align with industry requirements. Students now have more opportunities to explore diverse fields, combining disciplines like technology with humanities, or engineering with management. At our university, we offer honors programs that allow students to pursue a specialized course of study in their chosen field and develop expertise in a specific area. Additionally, the minors program allows students to opt for secondary area of study that complements a student's major field of study. It allows students to explore additional interests outside of their primary academic focus and gain knowledge in a different discipline. Vocational training, internships, and industry collaborations have also become more prominent.

The government's vision of "Viksit Bharath" aims to drive innovation by increasing government and private sector investments in research infrastructure. Initiatives like 'Startup India' and 'One Nation One Subscription (ONOS)' fosters a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and interdisciplinary research excellence across India's higher education ecosystem.

In today's interconnected world, international collaborations have become essential for academic institutions to thrive. International collaborations, exchange programs and adopting global education standards, broaden student horizons and prepare them for international career opportunities.

The rapid evolution of technology has also necessitated a shift in higher education. Universities are constantly updating their curriculum, increasingly incorporating courses in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), data science, cyber security, IoT, machine learning and

blockchain into their curriculum, aiming to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed for the 21st century.

There is also an emphasis towards accessible and inclusive education. Scholarships, ONOS and digital learning platforms are helping marginalized communities access quality education.

However, challenges remain. We are still plagued by issues like infrastructure gaps, quality disparity between institutions, and the need for continuous skill upgradation. To address the dynamic needs of a rapidly changing world, the Indian higher education system must continually evolve into a more adaptive, innovative and globally competitive ecosystem.

Any innovative teaching methods you have implemented?

At HITS, students benefit from an academically robust and flexible learning environment and multifaceted teaching pedagogies that prioritize skill development, active student engagement and real-world preparedness, all while encouraging creativity.

Hindustan has embraced a unique system that perfectly blends together traditional classroom practices with technological interventions facilitating in-depth learning, up-skilling and better outcomes. The highly flexible system also incorporates project-based learning, where students are encouraged to work on projects from their first year. The projects afford students an opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills to complex, real-world challenges, building confidence and expertise.

With the introduction of Outcome Based Education (OBE), the student-centric learning model that focuses on defining specific learning outcomes or goals for students and then designing the curriculum, instructional strategies and assessment methods to help students achieve those outcomes, there is a shift of focus from traditional teacher-centric methods. OBE recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and assessment. Instead, classes, learning opportunities, and assessments should be designed in ways that best support students in achieving the specified outcomes. The role of the faculty adapts into trainer, facilitator and mentor based on the outcome targeted.

The choice-based credit system, industry-integrated curriculum and value added honors and minors provide students unprecedented academic flexibility, allowing them to customize their learning paths, explore interdisciplinary interests, and develop personalized academic trajectories that reflect individual career aspirations.

Our universities are making significant strides in internationalizing their campuses. By collaborating with industry leaders and institutions worldwide, they are ensuring a high-quality education for their students. Faculty exchange and research collaborations ensure that the teachers gain exposure to diverse pedagogical approaches, innovative teaching techniques, and cutting-edge research. They also foster a more inclusive and global mindset among faculty ensuring that they create graduates who are world-ready and job-ready.

Hybrid teaching models that



are increasingly sophisticated and blend online and offline instructional methods are being increasingly adopted across our university. These tend to create dynamic, accessible educational experiences that accommodate diverse learning styles and technological capabilities. The holistic and adaptive educational ecosystems that are created by these innovative approaches prepare learners to navigate complex professional landscapes with creativity, critical thinking, and practical expertise.

R&D is very important for the success of any university. How much do you invest, especially for research in emerging areas?

HITS has established itself as a leading research institution, committed to pushing the boundaries of knowledge. Over the years, our university has established a comprehensive and cutting-edge research infrastructure, evidenced by over 600 Research Scholars, more than 5,500 research publications in Scopus and H-index, 24,000 citations and 260 patent filings.

HITS has demonstrated a robust and strategic approach to research and development (R&D) with significant investments across multiple emerging technological domains. HITS has set-up 16 specialized Research Centers of Excellence & Skill/Training Centers focusing on cutting-edge domains such as clean energy, underwater communication, machine learning, cyber security, simulation, robotics, hydrogen technology, space research, digital health, and artificial intelligence. It has also partnered with industry leaders such as IBM and Q-Max to launch laboratories with advanced equipments and software.

The recent addition to HITS is the Centre for Hydrogen Technologies and Carbon Utilization (CHTCU) that aspires to play a pivotal role in enabling the transition to a low-carbon economy by pioneering sustainable practices, fostering technological breakthroughs, and shaping policies for a carbon-neutral future. Through its initiatives, CHTCU is committed to advancing global efforts toward climate resilience and energy equity.

The success of the Structural Impact Crash Simulation Centre (SIMCRASH), culminated in the establishment of two laboratories in collaboration with Naval Science and Technological Laboratory in February 2024. This has opened new avenues in Swarm Intelligence and Underwater Internet of Things, with significant funding opportunities through Naval Research Boards.

In addition to this, HITS has two incubation centers that promote innovation and entrepreneurial spirit among students and faculty alike. Every year, special seed funding is provided for startups in their early stages of development. From validating a business idea, developing a minimum viable product (MVP) to securing initial traction, seed funding can give startups the initial boost and can lay the foundation for future growth and success.

HITS' research strategy is distinguished by strategic

collaborations with premier institutions like Cranfield University UK, IIT Madras, and international partners and gaining substantial support from government agencies like SERB, DST, NTSL and DRDO. The investment goes far beyond monetary resources, emphasizing on creating an ecosystem of innovation that addresses complex global challenges through interdisciplinary research.

By creating centers of excellence in emerging technological areas and fostering an environment that encourages scholars to transform curiosity into impactful discoveries, HITS is positioning itself as a leader in technological innovation. The institution's approach is fundamentally about creating meaningful impact, bridging academia and industry, and contributing to national technological advancement.

Scholarships are vital, especially for EBC (economically backward class) students? What provisions do you have?

The motto "To Make Every Man a Success and No Man a Failure" finds its most tangible expression through HITS' comprehensive scholarship program, transforming an inspirational philosophy into

concrete educational support. By offering scholarships worth Rs. 5 crore every year, the institution actively dismantles economic barriers that might prevent talented students from achieving their academic potential.

Our comprehensive scholarship program encompasses multiple dimensions of financial support and is strategically designed to support economically backward class (EBC) and meritorious students across diverse backgrounds.

The K.C.G. Verghese Merit Scholarship is offered to top rank holders in Plus 2 and equivalent examinations with 100% tuition fee waiver. The Dr. (Mrs.) Elizabeth Verghese Girl Empowerment Scholarship is offering to meritorious girl students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Special scholarships are also offered to Children of Defence Personnel and Martyrs, specially-abled individuals and top-performers in university entrance examinations (HITSEEE and HITSCAT).

Complete tuition fee waiver, free accommodation and specialized training are offered to high-achieving athletes under the sports excellence scholarships.

Students can also avail scholarships from government institutions and private global intuitions including KEB Hana Bank, Study in India and COMPEX. KEB Hana Bank recently awarded \$10,000 to meritorious students to encourage them to pursue higher education at HITS.

The scholarship program is meticulously structured to provide comprehensive support, ensuring that talented students from economically challenging backgrounds can access world-class educational opportunities. By offering extensive financial assistance and targeted support, HITS enables students from all economic backgrounds to pursue their academic and professional aspirations without being constrained by economic limitations.





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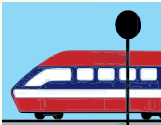
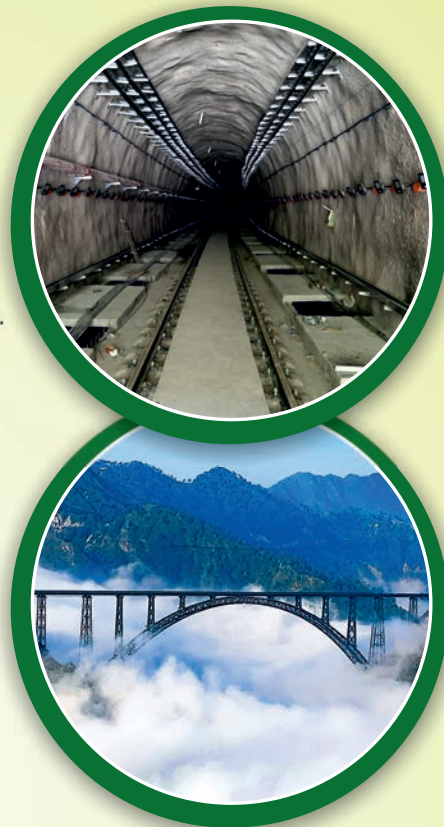
(A Government of India Undertaking)



Projects are under execution:

- Udampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link Project (USBRL): KRCL is executing 52.20 km of the USBRL project, which features the world's tallest railway bridge over the River Chenab and India's first cable-stayed railway bridge, the Anji Bridge. The project is nearing completion. Approximate cost of KRCL portion of this project is Rs.18,000 Cr..
- Construction of Rolling Stock Component Factory at Lote, near Chiplun for Central Railway at an estimated cost of Rs. 403 Cr.
- Execution of viaduct, major Bridge, ROBs and other allied works of Khurda Road-Bolangir new BG Rail link project in Odisha at an estimated cost of Rs.337 Cr.
- Construction of twin tube tunnel road project in Kerala at an approximate cost of Rs.2,300 Cr.
- Rail connectivity to Vizhinjam International Seaport in Kerala at an estimated cost of Rs. 1,000 Cr.
- Electrification works across various Zonal Railways at 10 locations, with a total project cost of Rs. 500 Cr.
- Operations and maintenance of Navi Mumbai Metro for a period of 3 years, starting from April 1, 2024.
- Currently, feasibility studies are being conducted for 37 projects, with Detailed Project Reports (DPR) being prepared for the same number. Project Management Consultancy (PMC) services are being provided for 9 projects, Design Consultancy for 14 projects, and third-party inspections for 54 projects. The total estimated cost for these efforts is Rs. 125 crore.
- Railway Siding for NTPC at Kudgi and Gadawara at an approximate cost of Rs. 1,200 Cr.
- **International Projects:**
 - 1) Operations and Maintenance of the Jayanagar to Kurtha Railway line in Nepal.
 - 2) Rehabilitation of Railway system in Magadi, Kenya for M/s Tata Chemicals Ltd.

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Completed Major Projects:

- 11 tunnels along Mumbai-Pune Expressway at a cost of Rs.213 Cr.
- 14 ROBs in Jharkhand State (Cost Rs.166 Cr.)
- Railway Siding for Adani Power-Udupi in Karnataka (Cost Rs.60 Cr.)
- Railway siding for Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd in Karnataka. (Cost Rs. 80 Cr.)
- Doubling of 47 km Roha-Veer section on KRCL at a cost of Rs. 550 Cr.
- Electrification of the entire Konkan Railway route (740 km) at a cost of Rs. 1,287 Cr.
- Successfully implemented Financial Accounting ERP in Mumbai Rail Vikas Corporation.
- Successfully completed feasibility studies for 17 projects, prepared Detailed Project Reports (DPR) for 9 projects, provided Project Management Consultancy (PMC) for 8 projects, delivered Design Consultancy for 13 projects, and conducted third-party inspections for 49 projects.
- **International Projects:**
 - 1) Successfully supplied and commissioned DEMU Train-sets to Nepal Railway.
 - 2) Final Location Survey work and DPR for new BG Line (136 Km) between Raxaul (India) and Kathmandu (Nepal) have been completed. Traverse Survey, Topographic Survey, Geological Mapping & Field Survey are completed for full stretch.

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Quantum Science

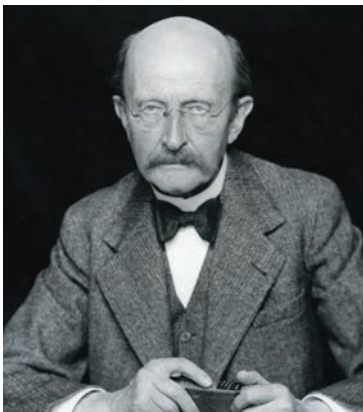
The year 2024 saw the emergence of several important real-world use cases of quantum computing and the UN proclaiming that 2025 will be the **International Year Of Quantum Science And Technology** is very timely.

Quantum computing leverages the unusual properties of particles when observed at the sub-atomic level, such as superposition and entanglement, to carry out certain computational tasks hundreds of millions of times more quickly than traditional computers.

The mission of the International Year of Quantum Science & Technology (IYQ) is to use the occasion of 100 years of quantum mechanics in 2025 to help raise public awareness of the importance and impact of quantum science and applications on all aspects of life.

Experts predict that it will revolutionize many fields, including climate modelling, material discovery, genomics, clean energy, profoundly affect the evolution of AI, natural language processing, autonomous driving and computer vision applications at unprecedented speed.

Over the years quantum mechanics have brought in lot of developments/innovations like lasers, transistors, LED (light-emitting diodes), medical imaging, electron microscopes and even cell phones have seen rapid growth and power due to science of quantum mechanics.



PIC - By Hugo Erfurth - This file was derived from: Max Planck by Hugo Erfurth 1938cr. jpgOriginal source: <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/bestand/objekt/max-planck>, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=153625300>

With energy crisis, a quantum computer can solve certain problems using 50,000 times less energy than the world's most powerful supercomputer, would be a superb and effective alternative. This energy advantage is critical for

reducing the environmental impact of data processing, which currently accounts for approximately 460TWh of global electricity demand.

The global quantum effort leading to research and innovation in quantum science and technology is continually rising with current worldwide investments exceeding \$40 billion. Overall, the global quantum technology market is projected to reach \$106 billion by 2040.

Benefits of quantum science

Quantum computing is a multidisciplinary field that uses quantum mechanics to solve complex problems faster than classical computers. Quantum Technology has unfolded new

frontiers with wide-spread applications. Applying the properties of quantum physics, provides better security and long-distance communications.

It has a wide range of applications, including healthcare and medical research, earth observation, early detection of natural calamities, environmental monitoring, construction, energy, navigation, and defence.

Some of the key domains where Quantum technology is applied include

- Quantum Computation uses quantum physics to solve problems at speeds not possible with classical computers. While conventional computers use “bits”, the basis of quantum computing is the “qubit”. Qbit is a fundamental unit of operation of quantum computing.
- Superposition allows a quantum computer to perform many operations simultaneously and millions of times faster than classical computers.
- Quantum computing can help solve complex problems in data science.
- Quantum computing could help create new materials that could help with climate change. It could also help develop faster ships, boats, and airplanes.
- Quantum physics is used in the Global Positioning System (GPS) to calculate distances between destinations and help people navigate unknown locations.
- Quantum cryptography uses the laws of physics to provide secure internet communication.

The year 2025 was chosen by UN as International Year of Quantum Science & Technology (IYQ) as it recognizes 100 years since the initial development of quantum mechanics. The whole aim of IYQ is to increase public awareness of the importance of quantum science and applications, enhancing international, multilateral and interdisciplinary scientific cooperation among research institutions, researchers and innovators in quantum science and technology, and/or ensuring a focus on the application of quantum science and technology for sustainable development.

Events and resources across the globe will be catalogued on the IYQ website. So if you are hosting a quantum-themed event in 2025 — something that takes place at a particular time or if you have a quantum-themed online resource (e.g. educational materials, press/news stories, podcasts, videos, etc.), do share the information - info@quantum2025.org.

The best part is all events and online resources can be promoted with the IYQ logo.



PIC - Plaque at the Humboldt University of Berlin: "Max Planck, discoverer of the elementary quantum of action h , taught in this building from 1889 to 1928." CC BY 2.5, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=278259>



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
Quantum Science
and Technology

- Quantum Sensing is an advanced sensor technology that analyses the changes in motion, and electric and magnetic fields at the atomic level. It allows for extremely precise measurements.
- Quantum algorithms can speed up processes relative to classical hardware.
- Quantum technology provides insights into biological systems, such as the structure of proteins and smell receptors.
- Quantum technology is used to create solar cells and energy-efficient devices such as batteries and diagnostic devices in health industries- such as sensors and imaging devices.
- Quantum simulations can help us understand protein folding as well as help cure diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, etc.

Although the benefits of quantum technology are versatile and promising, there are still some pessimists who predict it will bring the arrival of "Q-Day" or "Quantum Day", a hypothetical day when quantum computers will be able to break the encryption algorithms that protect most of the world's digital information - a time when quantum computers become powerful enough to render many methods of encryption redundant – with severe consequences for privacy and security.

Also data corruption may happen if output information is retrieved after a quantum computation process is completed. During the computation phase of a quantum calculation, the slightest disturbance in a quantum system (for example, photon or wave of EM radiation) causes the quantum computation to collapse, this is known as De-coherence.

Quantum Technology in India

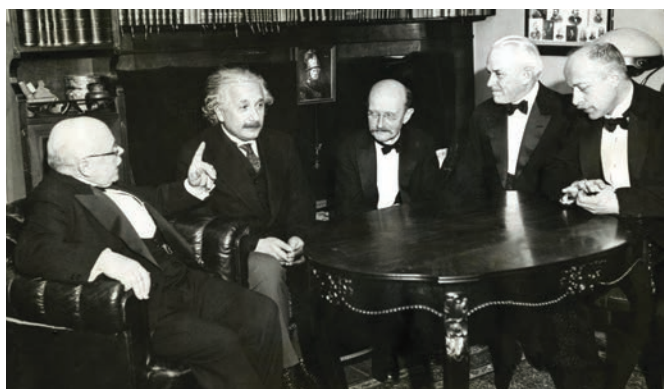
The IISc (Indian Institute of Science) has a dedicated research area for quantum technology. The Initiative on Quantum Technology explores many areas such as: superconducting qubit devices, single photon sources and detectors for quantum communications, integrated photonic quantum networks, and quantum sensors.

This year, the Indian government has introduced a NM-QTA (National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications) with a total budget of INR 8000 crores over a five-year period. Indian Government approved National Quantum Mission at a total cost of INR 6003.65 crores, to scale up scientific and industrial R&D, for accelerating Quantum Technology-led economic growth and leverage India into a leading nation in the area.

Acknowledging the potential of quantum computing, the Indian government has taken the following steps to promote an innovative ecosystem of Quantum Technology in India.

National Quantum Mission:

In 2023, this mission was approved by the government aiming to seed, nurture and scale up scientific and industrial research and create a vibrant and innovative ecosystem in Quantum Technology (QT) to accelerate QT-led economic growth and make India one of the leading nations in Quantum Technologies and Applications (QTA).



PIC - From left to right: W. Nernst, A. Einstein, Planck, R. A. Millikan, and von Laue at a dinner given by von Laue in Berlin on 11 November 1931

One of the major aims was to set up Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs) that will be set up in top academic and National institutes in the domains of quantum Computing, Quantum Communication, Quantum Sensing and metrology and Quantum Materials and devices.

Quantum research facility: The Indian Army established the Quantum Lab at the Military College of Telecommunication Engineering, Madhya Pradesh to spearhead research and training in the quantum field.

FAQs on Quantum Technology

What is a qubit?

A qubit is a fundamental unit of operation in quantum computing.

What is quantum key distribution (QKD)?

QKD is the method of distributing the key among parties. It uses properties found in quantum mechanics to exchange cryptographic keys. It ensures a secure communication.

What is quantum technology?

Quantum technology uses quantum mechanics properties like superposition and entanglement to develop new technologies.

What is quantum sensing?

Quantum sensing is a technology that uses quantum resources to measure changes in atoms at the atomic level. Quantum sensors are already being used in GPS-free navigation.

What are some applications of quantum technology?

Quantum technology has applications in many fields, including healthcare, environmental monitoring, energy, navigation, and defense.

What are some benefits of quantum technology?

Quantum technology can speed up processing by a significant amount compared to traditional computing. It can also help with faster decision-making, reduce time-to-market, and increase productivity.

What are some challenges of quantum technology?

Quantum technology faces challenges such as high error, decoherence, and the complexity of quantum gates. Quantum computers also require specialized materials and techniques, and scalability can be an issue.



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5G in the Operating Room

Advances in Technology Unlock Opportunities for Hospitals

How can surgery be made more cost-effective, safer and more efficient in the future? An interdisciplinary French-German team has developed high-tech hybrid operating rooms that harness the power of 5G and AI to unlock whole new applications.

A medical emergency requires complicated surgery. But the closest specialist is hundreds of kilometers away. These days, this kind of situation could be a life-or-death issue, but just a few short years from now, surgeons might be able to operate on patients remotely, with support from a robot with haptic feedback. The hospital would operate its own 5G network, ensuring low-latency connections to exchange data continuously during the operation. Researchers worked on these and other scenarios in the 5G-OR (Establishing the next generation of a 5G-enabled operating room ecosystem to improve patient outcome) project, which has just concluded.

“These days, economic pressures mean that hospitals are forced to build efficient new infrastructure and processes while also finding fresh new ways to use technology to connect and share data,” says Johannes Horsch, a project manager working in health technology research at the Fraunhofer Institute for Manufacturing Engineering and Automation IPA at the Mannheim location. “The French-German project 5G-OR, which brings public and industrial research together, addresses both aspects.” It is supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action.

A Roland Berger survey conducted in July 2024 showed that seven out of ten hospitals in Germany posted losses last year. In addition to consolidating their services and modernizing their infrastructure, many hospitals view collaboration and mergers as an especially important building block in putting themselves on a secure financial footing now and for the future. Shortages of healthcare professionals present another challenge.

Hybrid high-tech operating rooms in Germany and France

The 5G-OR project brought engineers, entrepreneurs, surgeons and anesthesiologists together across national borders at three locations: Mannheim, Berlin, and Strasbourg. The experts developed three high-tech hybrid operating rooms with intraoperative imaging systems. Aside from Fraunhofer IPA, the project also involved the Institut Hospitalo-Universitaire

(IHU) in Strasbourg on the French side, in Germany Charité — Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Reutlingen University, SectorCon GmbH, and KARL STORZ SE & Co. KG, the private French research and technology institute bcom, and the French start-up Rhythm Diagnostic Systems, otherwise known as RDS.

“The team’s main objectives are to lower the rate of complications arising from medical procedures and streamline workflows in the OR. Medical errors still occur in some eight to twelve percent of all hospital stays today,” Horsch explains. “The introduction of 5G technology enables secure, flexible and reliable wireless communication and the exchange of data through a powerful data pipeline. This level of connectivity reduces errors and enhances efficiency.” Artificial intelligence (AI) is used to analyze data more effectively during surgery and support the use of robotics in medicine. Prof. Sascha Treskatsch, head of the Department of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine at Charité, Campus Benjamin Franklin, also believes in this research from the user side: “Processing large volumes of multimodal data records in real time will revolutionize patient monitoring and thus therapy in clinical settings, and especially in the operating room during anesthesia. 5G-OR is the basis for this.”

The international team put four relevant applications into practice as part of the project

AI-assisted monitoring of vital signs: Patients wear a smart patch throughout treatment, from the operation through to follow-up care at home. Sensors in the patch track vital signs and communicate them wirelessly to a monitored platform, where they are analyzed using AI. This makes it possible to detect potential complications early on. 5G-OR is also laying the foundation for a completely new kind of high-frequency data processing in real time, which will enable widespread use of AI.

AI-supported analysis of surgical data: During the operation, AI can be used to analyze endoscopic images or video sequences, for example, along with data from surgical instruments and processes. In this way, the progress of the operation can be determined and potential anomalies or risks identified. These kinds of analyses also streamline workflows in the operating room.

Robot-assisted telesurgery: High-tech operating rooms allow surgeons to operate on patients remotely, with support from a robot with haptic feedback. 5G ensures high bandwidths for the huge volumes of data involved, along with a low-latency connection for exchanging data in real time during the operation.



© Fraunhofer IPA

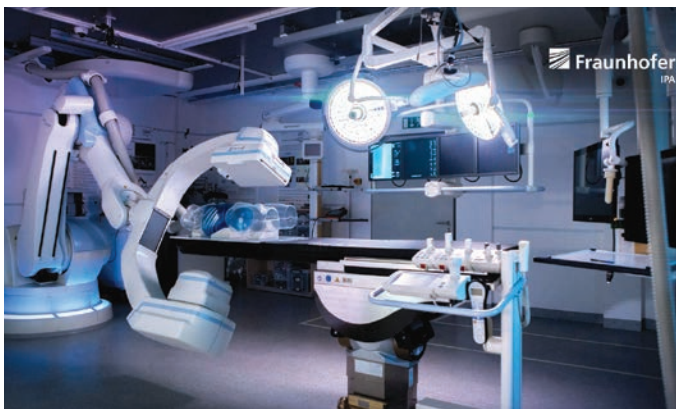
The mobile robotic platform developed by Reutlingen University together with Fraunhofer IPA in the experimental OR in Strasbourg enables the autonomous transport of medical material and instruments.

Especially in light of the wave of consolidation sweeping hospitals across Germany, this application can help in emergencies when specialists are not available locally. The system can also be used locally outside the OR, for example to protect medical staff from risks such as X-ray radiation or infections.

Mobile robotic support in the operating room:

A mobile robot developed specifically for OR settings transports medical supplies and instruments. It eases hospital staff workloads

by handling logistical tasks during the operation. Methods long ago adopted in industrial factories require the utmost in accuracy, safety, flexibility and reliability when used in an operating room. Campus-wide 5G networks make this a reality by providing data in real time.



© Fraunhofer IPA

In the experimental, networked hybrid OR at Fraunhofer IPA in Mannheim, 5G enables data transfer in real time.

The focus now is on transferring these applications and technologies into clinical practice. This includes extensive testing, reviews of medical approvals, and finding paths to market through industry partners and start-ups. The project team also plans to expand the network. Their aims here are twofold: to get broader user feedback on the one hand and strengthen international collaboration on the other. "Close collaboration between Germany and France within the project is not just important. It's vital," Horsch

says. "Through these efforts, we are enabling the cross-border exchange of data and accelerating international consensus on the use of AI in operating rooms. In this way, 5G-OR is contributing to advances in surgical practice and to improving patient safety in Europe."

ITB Berlin Convention 2025

The World's Leading Travel Trade Show, ITB Berlin 2025, has announced its theme for this year's ITB Berlin Convention 'The Power of Transition lives here'. Taking place from Tuesday, 4 to Thursday, 6 March as a B2B event the ITB Berlin Convention will devote itself to the transformative challenges and opportunities of the global travel and tourism industry. The ITB Transition Labs

and Corporate Culture Clash Track are new features of the programme. In addition, for the first time the events on all four convention stages will be live streamed to enable members of the global travel community to access the sessions with more than 400 international speakers from anywhere in the world. Admission to the ITB Berlin Convention is included in a trade show ticket and a press pass.

The travel industry's leading think tank will host a total of 17 theme tracks on four stages that will examine current issues concerning sustainability, technology, corporate culture and many other topics. The content is curated by a board of leading industry experts, ensuring that the tracks offer practical, up-to-date and innovative insights and include high-profile speakers.

Taking as its slogan 'The Power of Transition lives here', the ITB Berlin Convention 2025 presents first programme highlights



and innovations. "The ITB Berlin Convention 2025 places the spotlight on the ongoing change in the tourism industry. Under its new slogan, it emphasises the dynamic process currently shaping the industry and underlines the need to constantly adapt to changing conditions. In doing so it cements its position as a platform for dialogue and further development amid continuing change", said Deborah Rothe, Director of ITB Berlin.

NEW: ITB Transition Labs

Featuring 20 exclusive insights in the space of 90 minutes, this new event format offers marketing professionals in the destination and hospitality sector an in-depth look at data-driven recommendations for action. The labs are specifically designed to provide decision-makers with practical tools for confidently mastering future challenges. The sessions can be booked in the ITB Berlin ticket shop.

NEW: Corporate Culture Clash Track

The new Corporate Culture Clash Track on the Green Stage looks at the challenges and opportunities of a changing corporate culture. The focus is on topics such as diversity, new work, new technologies and the expectations of Gen Z.

A cozy resort with mesmerising views

This time I had the pleasure of visiting a five star resort in Kovalam - Gokulam Grand Turtle on the Beach. Landing at the Thiruvananthapuram airport, my transfers to the resort was quick- within 30 minutes (its just 16 km), with a slight delay at the toll. Entering into the resort I was garland in the Indian traditional way and a welcome drink. The lobby is quite cozy and extends into a veranda from where you get an excellent view of the sea.



Dinu Geetha Sasidharan

As my room was getting ready I waited in the lobby and a while later Dinu Geetha Sasidharan, GM, Gokulam Grand Turtle on the Beach came to meet me. An accomplished Hotel General Manager with over a decade of experience he said “With just 44 inventory we are generally full. Hence the delay. In the meantime lets go to our Rooftop Bar WWW.” The lift brought us to the top floor and what a view it provided us.

“Our rooftop bar is very popular in Kovalam. It is a great place to party with our wide range of wine and cocktails, excellent food, relaxing environment with amazing city and beach views from top,” said Dinu.

Perched near the serene Hawa Beach in Kovalam, the resort provides its guests to gorgeous sunsets and mesmerising views. The resorts sea-facing accommodations come in four different categories. The resort has 40 rooms (Deluxe Rooms - 17, Arabian Sea View – 19, Duplex – 4) and four signature suites (Japanese, Honeymoon, Art Décor and Contemporary).

I had my meals at Catamaran, the resorts multi-cuisine restaurant, where the chefs prepared a wide range of delicacies accompanied by fine beverages. I also tried the room service.



Gokulam Grand Turtle brings you a list of unique facilities like a swimming pool, a fitness centre, indoor games and a library. “We have a variety of



indoor games that are quite popular especially when the weather gets rough and rainy. We also have a small but nice library with an excellent collection of books in different languages,” said Dinu. Plans are afoot to extend the library.

On the MICE front, set against the limitless and picturesque backdrop of the beach, is the resorts banquet hall - Arabian Sea Hall. The hall can accommodate upto 150 persons. They also have a boardroom for meetings and small events be it a conference, seminar or office meeting. Both the event spaces are facilitated with modern audio-visual equipment. The spacious lawn is perfect for destination weddings in Kovalam and beachfront events.

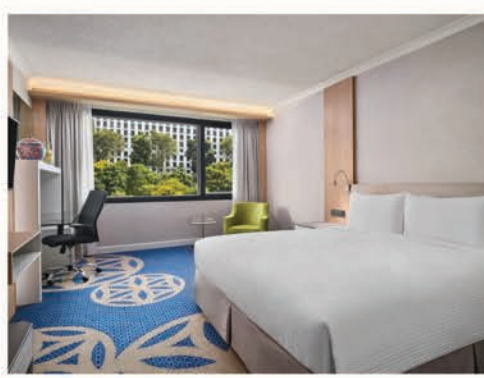
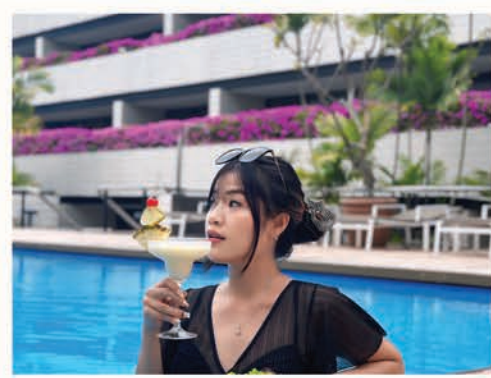
The resort also has Vaidyasala (an Ayurveda spa). Rooted in tradition, Ayurveda is a form of medicine that is witnessing an increasing number of patrons.

Kovalam is an internationally renowned beach and has become a preferred haunt for tourists since the 1930s. Kovalam was brought to the public eye by the queen of Travancore, Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai, who decided to build a palace for herself at a rock top near the beach, as her private residence better known as Halcyon Castle.

Kovalam has 3 major beaches in its 17 km coastline. Of three small bays separated by rocky outcrops, the southernmost, known as the Lighthouse Beach, is the most popular. The lovely old lighthouse that gives the beach its name is the Vizhinjam Lighthouse. Edakallu, a rocky headland separates Eve’s Beach or howah Beach from the lighthouse beach. The hill that separates Howah Beach from the third of Kovalam’s celebrated beaches house the government Guest house and the Halcyon Castle.

One should also visit the Napier Museum, built in 19th century it houses a rare collection of archaeological and historic art crafts. As well as Thenmala, the home to India’s first planned eco-tourism project.





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Concorde Hotel Singapore has recently achieved GSTC (Global Sustainability Tourism Council) accreditation. This recognition underscores the hotel's dedication to minimising its environmental impact while positively contributing to the local community.

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Rooms with a view

A short drive from Gokulam Grand Turtle on the Beach, Kovalam brought me to Gokulam Grand Trivandrum and as we drove in I was pretty impressed by the hotel façade. The lobby is huge and one can't help noticing Black Coffee – the hotel's chic coffee shop set beside the lobby.



Gopi Mohan

I checked into the Grand Suite which provided beautiful views of the Akkulam Lake and surrounding landscape. The Grand Suite comprises of a carpeted living room area, a dining area and a double bedroom offering the state of the art in amenities.

In the evening had the opportunity to spend quality time with Gopi Mohan, GM, Gokulam Grand Trivandrum. With 21 years



of experience, he has worked with numerous brands India, Dubai and Saudi Arabia. "Hope you are enjoying the view? This is one of our biggest plus points. Apart from the high end luxury that we are able to provide our guests, our location is perfect for both business and leisure travellers. We are close to Trivandrum's Technopark, near the domestic and international airports, as well as tourist sites like the world renowned Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple," said Gopi Mohan.

We were sitting at the Black Coffee lounge, a good place to relax as most seats give you a nice window view of the surroundings. "It's a great place for our guests to meet there visitors over a quick bite or a cup of coffee. The menu is quit reasonably priced and the takeaways is quite an attraction to walk is and guest checking out." said a smiling Gopi Mohan.



My place restaurant on the ground floor, opposite Black Coffee lounge, is the hotel's all day dining restaurant. I had all my meals at My Place, including a yummy breakfast with the GM. The decor at the restaurant seeks inspiration from Trivandrum's ancient culture and serves an eclectic range of pan Indian and international cuisines.

There are five categories of rooms – Deluxe, Deluxe Lake view, Executive, Executive Lake view and the Grand Suite. The hotel garners high praise for its spacious rooms, as well as the hotel's tranquil atmosphere and immaculate cleanliness.

On the MICE front it has banquet halls, board rooms and conferencing areas with soft lighting, plenty of chrome and glass, subtle motifs that reflect the local culture all equipped with the state of the art amenities.



The hotel has an excellent infinity pool looking over the city and its lush landscape. The Aqua bar serves an exotic range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, grills and finger foods. A deck beside the pool can also be utilised to organise pools parties and functions accommodating upto 50 persons.

Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple

No feature on Thiruvananthapuram (or Trivandrum), the capital of the southern Indian state of Kerala is complete without the mention of the world renowned Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple. It is a symbol of timeless spirituality and architectural grandeur and believed to be the world's richest temple. This ancient temple dedicated



to Lord Vishnu showcasing a unique sleeping deity visible through three gates. Considered to be one of the Divya Desams or 108 sacred Vishnu temples in India, the presiding deity, Lord Vishnu, is depicted as reclining on Anantha, the hooded Serpent. The works of the Tamil Azhvars (saints) have mentioned the Divya Desams as the holiest abodes of Lord Vishnu. The idol of the presiding deity is noted for its composition which has 12008 salagramams, which were brought from Nepal.

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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.

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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.



“We conceptualized Villa Maya as a unique space where nostalgia meets modernity”

It was when the dynamic Shafee Ahmed, Cluster GM, Gokulam Grand Hotel & Spa, Bangalore spoke highly of the restaurant Villa Maya and the innovative Sashi Jacob, VP (who is also the Chef), that I decided to visit this wonderful gastronomically friendly restaurant. And I wasn't disappointed as I not only savoured the delicacies to the fullest but also enjoyed the company of Sashi Jacob.

Nestled in the heart of Trivandrum, Kerala, Villa Maya is an award-winning restaurant. The lush gardens, water features, and heritage architecture provide a refreshing environment, encouraging creativity, collaboration, and relaxation. Guests can savour award-winning dishes while enjoying the enchanting ambiance of its indoor halls or lush outdoor settings.

Created by the reputed top business house Muthoot Pappachan Group which has its roots in numerous sectors including Retail Trading, Financial Services, Automotive, Realty, IT Services, Healthcare, Precious Metals, Global Services, Alternate Energy and Hospitality Villa Maya is today among the top restaurants in the city.

Headed by **Sashi Jacob, VP, MPG Group**, a visionary leader, whose creative expertise and operational excellence has significantly shaped the hospitality division's success. Beginning his career in 1991 as a chef, Sashi has worked in hotels, cruises, airline catering etc. Under his leadership, MPG's flagship property, Villa Maya, has achieved numerous prestigious awards over the years, becoming a benchmark for excellence in the industry. In a tête-à-tête with our Editor he highlights how Villa Maya is unique. **Excerpts**



What was the idea behind creating Villa Maya?

Villa Maya is a living testament to history, culture, and timeless elegance. Set in a meticulously restored Dutch manor – 250+ years old, which once belonged to the Maharaja of Travancore, Villa Maya beautifully bridges the past and the present. Recognizing its rich heritage, we conceptualized Villa Maya as a unique space where nostalgia meets modernity.

Every element of Villa Maya has been thoughtfully designed to evoke a sense of the glorious past, whether through the curated menu, the warm traditional welcome, guided palace tours, or the overall immersive experience. This seamless blend of heritage and contemporary hospitality ensures that Villa Maya is more than just a restaurant—it's a journey into history, offering moments that are best experienced rather than explained.

Villa Maya is not just about dining; it's about reliving history, creating memories, and savouring the essence of timeless elegance.

With Trivandrum having so many restaurants and star hotels, how do you distinguish yourself?

Villa Maya offers a dining experience that blends history, creativity, and sustainability, combining heritage charm with innovative gastronomy. We are renowned for our globally inspired menu with flavors from ethnic Kerala, Indian, Mediterranean, and Italian cuisines.

Each dish reflects a commitment to eco-conscious practices, using locally-sourced ingredients and sustainable presentation methods, ensuring every meal is both exquisite and impactful.

Our chefs craft culinary masterpieces that reimagine tradition with a modern twist, while our clients, are our true marketing ambassadors, share the unforgettable moments we create. At Villa Maya, every visit is a journey through culture, history, and exceptional hospitality.



With Villa Maya doing extremely well, what was the need for Bakers Arch?

As a group we are deeply passionate about our ventures, we have always prioritized creating unique and memorable experiences for our patrons. After achieving our goal of making Villa Maya a standalone brand synonymous with excellence, we ventured into opening a second outlet in Trivandrum.

When conceptualizing a second outlet, it was imperative for us to ensure it would not replicate what Villa Maya offers. Instead, it needed to carve out its own identity and match the reputation we had earned through Villa Maya's success. Baker's Arch is a manifestation of this vision—distinct in its offerings, designed to cater to a different audience, while still reflecting the passion, quality, and innovation that define us as a group.

Each element of Baker's Arch was carefully thought out to ensure it would stand on its own as a unique product, offering something entirely different from Villa Maya in terms of cuisine, concept, and experience. Through this, we aim to diversify not only our offerings but also the culinary landscape of Trivandrum.

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Loved the creativity at your restaurants. Where do you find these inspirations?

Inspiration for me comes from blending history, culture, and innovation. I've always believed in thinking out of box, and with Villa Maya, we wanted every element to tell a story. From the architecture to the food, we worked hard to create a dining experience that feels unique and meaningful. This philosophy extends to the dishes we serve—I've even incorporated ancient spice boxes as part of the plating, bringing history to the forefront in a way that feels fresh and engaging. Every detail reflects a journey, one that connects tradition with creativity, making every meal not just food but an experience to remember.

Sustainable food movement is the buzz word. What is the scene at your restaurants?

Villa Maya proudly stands at the forefront of the sustainable food movement, integrating eco-conscious practices into every aspect of its operations. From sourcing locally-grown ingredients to minimize carbon footprints, to using eco-friendly materials for plating and presentation, sustainability is at the heart of what we do.

Our commitment extends to effective waste management, energy-saving measures, and crafting culinary experiences that celebrate locally-sourced products. At Villa Maya, every dish is not just a meal but a statement of responsibility — blending exceptional flavors with a deep respect for our environment.

Theres a lot of talk that food could also be a form of therapy. Your views.

I couldn't agree more. Being deeply rooted in the culinary world, I find immense calm and clarity when immersed in creating. Working on new menus and exploring unique concepts allows me to channel my creativity, offering a sense of relaxation and focus like nothing else. For me, the joy lies in thinking out of box—crafting ideas that push boundaries and bring something entirely.

How can Villa Maya be a MICE destination?

It already is. It doubles as an ideal destination for MICE. Known for its historic charm and contemporary elegance, Villa Maya offers a perfect blend of functionality and aesthetics, making it a standout choice for hosting exceptional events. It features a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces that can accommodate different event sizes and themes. With modern audio-visual technology, high-speed internet, and professional lighting setups, Villa Maya ensures your business meetings and conferences are conducted seamlessly. I believe Villa Maya is not just a venue—it's an experience.

On a personal front how did you enter the cooking world?

I've always been a creative person, quick to bring ideas to life, even with limited time or resources. My artistic nature and passion span across many fields—whether it's exploring nature, sports, handcrafted art, landscaping, architecture, photography, or my love for animals.

Growing up in a fairly large family, food was always at the heart of our home. The meal experiences were unmatched. Guests would often drop by unannounced, yet my mother always managed to whip up something special, effortlessly turning simple ingredients into something extraordinary. Watching her create magic in the kitchen instilled in me a deep admiration for the art of cooking.

These early experiences shaped my passion, blending creativity with culinary exploration. It was in those moments—filled with food, family, and warmth—that I discovered how much joy and fulfilment cooking could bring.

What are the group's future plans?

Our future plans are rooted in growth, innovation, and staying true to the values that have shaped our journey so far. While Villa Maya has become synonymous with heritage, authenticity, and a unique dining experience, our focus is on expanding thoughtfully without compromising on quality or identity.

We aim to explore new markets and cities, carefully introducing concepts that are distinct and reflective of their own identity—much like what we achieved with Baker's Arch.

Creativity and storytelling will remain at the heart of everything we do, whether it's through menu curation, design, or guest experience.

Sustainability and community involvement will also play a significant role in our growth. From embracing eco-friendly practices to promoting local produce and artisans, we want our ventures to make a positive impact.

Ultimately, our goal is to create spaces where food, art, history, and culture come together to offer unforgettable experiences, while continuing to inspire and delight our patrons.

Delicacies that I relished at the restaurants -

At Villa Maya:

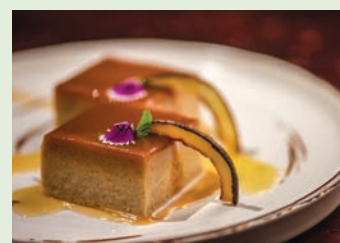
Mocktail: Villa Maya Blend – signature drink prepared with muddled organic mint, green chili, baby ginger, lime, a dash of honey, and aerated water.

Starters: Kaddu ki Galouti Kebab and Kandari Chembu.

Soup: Tender Coconut Broth - signature soup prepared from fresh tender coconut water & flavoured with mild spices and herbs.

Mains: Appam paired with Veg Mappas.

Dessert: Tres Leches (that I had at Baker's Arch).



Discovering Mauritius - Beyond the Beaches



Mauritius is often described as a tropical destination, and it is easy to see why. White sandy beaches, turquoise waters, and breathtaking sunsets lure travellers from across the globe, but there is much more to this island than meets the eye feels *Pooja Amritkar*

During my seven days in Mauritius, I experienced a paradise full of scenic landscapes, cultural treasures, and adrenaline-pumping adventures that go far beyond simply sipping wine on the beach. My trip started by meeting Urmila, our wonderful guide from Tam Tam Tours, who instantly made me feel at home with her warm and kind Mauritian hospitality.

stories of Mauritius coming to life here.

Caudan Waterfront in Port Louis holds an interesting food tour where we had the chance to try local street food like Dhol puri and the very refreshing Alouda Pillay. This lively hub is a great spot for shopping, dining, artistic, and cultural experiences. The festive Christmas decorations and colourful umbrellas lit up the place and gave us some Instagram-worthy shots. The waterfront is a great spot to take a walk or watch the sunset, with the harbour providing a picturesque backdrop.

Nature & Adventure

La Vallée des Couleurs Nature Park is an adventure lover's paradise. This 450 acres of land offers a variety of fun activities including hiking, quad biking, luge-karting, bicycle zipline, and crossing the Nepalese bridge. The park's walking trails lead us to breathtaking viewpoints and the famous geological wonder, 23 coloured Earth where the soil appears in layers of vibrant hues, a consequence of a volcanic eruption centuries ago. It is an exceptional view along with the many natural waterfalls and valleys that give a whole new perspective to the beauty of Mauritius. As I zipped through the air toward a waterfall, the adrenaline rush was high, and the view was breathtaking. It's an experience I'd recommend to anyone looking for adventure in Mauritius. We also saw deer and had lunch at the park's restaurant famous for their European, Indian, and local cuisines.

No trip to Mauritius would be complete without exploring

Chamarel, home to two most iconic landmarks: the Chamarel Waterfall and the Seven Coloured Earth. The waterfall is a spectacle of nature, the tallest single-drop waterfall in Mauritius at about 100m high cascading down a cliff into lush greenery below. Nearby, the Seven Coloured Earth is a fascinating geological phenomenon where layers of red, brown, and purple soil create an ethereal effect. Although the 2-hour ride from our hotel to Chamarel was tiring, these spectacular views made up for it. We had lunch at Le Chamarel Restaurant, 260 meters above sea level where the panoramic view is as amazing as the food.

Underwater Expedition

If you are looking for a unique, thrilling yet safe adventure, the **Blue Safari Submarine** is for you. I have always loved the underwater world and this was a rare opportunity to actually go



History & Culture

Mauritius has a rich colonial history, and nowhere is it more apparent than at **Château de Labourdonnais**. This 19th-century estate, a stunning mansion surrounded by orchards and gardens, a true testament to Mauritius's rich history. The Victorian-style master bedroom and the rare collection of Paul & Virginie are worth seeing. The highlight for me was the rum tasting session, where I savored a variety of locally produced rums infused with exotic flavours. My favourite was the coffee-vanilla rum. We wrapped up our visit by having a delicious and relaxing lunch at La Table du Château, overlooking the garden and château.

Grand Bassin, or Ganga Talao, is considered to be the 13th Jyotirlinga and the only Jyotirlinga out of India. The towering statues of Lord Shiva and Maa Durga, each 108 feet tall, greeted us as we entered. Surrounded by lush greenery and a serene lake, it's a spiritual haven for the soul. During Maha Shivaratri, devotees come from all around the island and will walk miles to collect sacred water from Ganga Talao.

Next, we visited the **Natural History Museum**, the oldest museum in Mauritius. The museum boasts an impressive array of exhibits that showcase Mauritius's unique biodiversity and history, including the famous Dodo – an extinct flightless bird endemic to Mauritius. It is captivating to see the old



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35 meters deep for 40 minutes, watch corals with colourful fish, discover a 17th-Century anchor and the Star Hope shipwreck – all without getting wet. This was undoubtedly one of the most memorable parts of my trip.

For five days, we stayed at Le Méridien Ile Maurice, a true paradise of comfort and luxury. The buffet was a dream, offering a wide variety of cuisines, with a standout Indian section that is hard to resist. On our last day, we moved to Canonnier Beachcomber,

where the rustic charm of the place stole my heart. The highlight here? Watching one of the most breathtaking sunsets I've ever seen.

Every corner of Mauritius offers something unique, from its stunning beaches to its towering mountains to its warm, welcoming people. This slice of paradise is worth every minute and every place is a postcard moment.

The Spirit of the Kreol Festival in Mauritius

One of the best times to visit Mauritius is in December, not only because of the perfect weather and Christmas decorations all around but also because of the vibrant **International Kreol Festival**. It's an experience like no other and on this December, from 12th to 22nd, the island was alive with the sounds, colours, traditions, dance, and flavours of Creole culture. The theme for this year was Kreolite boté nou mauricianisme – Creolity, the beauty of our Mauritanism. The celebration is a unique opportunity for locals and tourists to connect with the heart of Mauritius, the soul of its people, and the beauty of its shared history.

The festival kicked off on December 12th with an opening ceremony at the iconic **Le Morne**, a place rich in history and significance. The mountain, towering majestically over the island, stands as a symbol of resistance and resilience. The importance of Le Morne follows a dark and tragic legend when huge numbers of slaves were brought to the island against their will and forced to work. Many slaves managed to escape and seek refuge in the deep and dense forests of Le Morne Brabant Mountain.

However, when the British defeated the French and the army officials approached the base with the aim of delivering this life-changing good news - slavery had been abolished and they were all free now - the escaped slaves, known as maroons, were unaware of this. Tragically, fearing they were about to be captured and forced back to a life of bondage and slavery, they choose to leap from the cliffs into the ocean, preferring death to the risk of enslavement.

Prime Minister, Navin Ramgoolam, inaugurated the ceremony. Tourism Minister Richard Duval and Junior Minister Sydney Pierre emphasized the importance of celebrating Creole identity and how it has shaped Mauritius, "Creolité is the living flame of our multicultural country. And this Festival today represents openness and fusion," he said. This festival goes around the different corners of Mauritius, giving everyone an opportunity to be a part of it. "Our Creole identity has become our strength. Where everyone respects each other's identity. That's why we want this Festival to become an unforgettable moment for everyone", concluded the Minister of Tourism.



The next evening was Sega Jazz performance at Le Four à Chaux, Trou d'Eau Douce and we had fun grooving and dancing to the beats on the beach. The highlight for me was the upbeat Grand Concert at Cruise Terminal les Salines, in Port Louis, where talented local and international musicians gathered to perform on the big stage. The crowd was electric and although I couldn't understand much of the lyrics, I found myself swept up in the energy and vibing to the catchy tunes. It was heartwarming to see families, friends, parents, and kids all coming together to create beautiful memories on this unforgettable evening.

The next day, Kreol festival took us to **Grand Baie** to taste Mauritian cuisine and attend a beach concert. Tourists and locals gathered around the many food stalls, savouring dishes that were a mixture of African, Indian, Chinese, and European. I even danced a little with the performers backstage. The festival has it all - good food and good music - two things that quickly bring people together.

I had the privilege of meeting so many locals and it was clear how much they were enjoying this 10-day festival. Although, I couldn't stay for all 10 days, the International Kreol Festival is a powerful reminder of how culture connects people, breaks down barriers, and celebrates the beauty of diversity. Mauritius truly shows the Creol magic.



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