

ASIA'S leading business magazine

# M!CEtalk

A DDP Publication®

Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

Volume XIII Issue 6 November-December 2022 40 pages



A graphic design for the 'WEDDING TRAVEL SHOW'. It features a large red circle on the right side. The text 'WEDDING' is in white on a black background, and 'TRAVEL SHOW' is in white on a red background. The top and bottom of the graphic are decorated with a pattern of red dots.

A graphic design for 'EXPERT DISCOURSE'. The text 'EXPERT DISCOURSE' is in white on a black background. The top left corner has a pattern of wavy white lines, and the bottom right corner has a pattern of wavy white lines. A horizontal band of red dots runs across the middle of the graphic.







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ASIA'S leading business magazine  
**M!CE**talk  
Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

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M!CEtalk is printed, published, edited and owned by SanJeev, printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., C-52, DDA Shedi, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase - I, New Delhi - 110020 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi-110001



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# NEWS

## Global M!CE to generate US \$1,600 billion by 2028

A Research Dive report has predicted that the global M!CE industry will generate a revenue of US\$1,619.3 billion by 2028, growing at a CAGR of 5.9 per cent during (2021–2028). “Increase in globalisation has led to progressive expansion of businesses. Initiatives taken by corporates to travel numerous destinations and host an event to not only cherish cross-culture interactions among employees but also favor international marketing,” the report said.



## Corporate travel shifting patterns: Sabre survey



Sabre recently released the results of a new survey of travel agents and travel management companies (TMCs) in Asia-Pacific region.

Results revealed “a rise in internal corporate travel, to bring remote workers together, will create recovery opportunities, while 45 per cent respondents said emerging corporate travel markets are important for growth”.



## Sri Lanka accords tourist visa category to M!CE

Sri Lanka Tourism has announced that M!CE travelers will be recognised under the tourist visa category. This measure is being implemented by the Sri

Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) in association with the Department of Immigration and Emigration. SLCB said “it is our view that this facilitation will provide a solution for the long-lasting issue faced by the local travel industry on the unavailability of M!CE statistics”. “There is a gap of US \$10 between a tourist visa and business visa. Since meetings and conferences were categorised under business visa, most M!CE travelers tend to obtain tourist visas instead of business visas due to the difference in visa fee,” SLCB said.

## BESydney secures 14 bid wins worth US \$40 mn for events



BESydney, specialist bidding services organisation responsible for attracting domestic and global meetings to Sydney, has secured 14 bid wins with a combined direct expenditure

(DE) of US \$40 million. These events will bring in thousands of international delegates from key industries and fields of study, solidifying the Sydney business event pipeline through to 2029 with 85 global and national events, generating an estimated US \$483 million in DE. Lyn Lewis-Smith, CEO, BESydney, said, “We are so thrilled to be finishing 2022 on a high and with confidence for what 2023 holds for BESydney.”

## Box Cricket at sea for M!CE groups



Resorts World Cruises recently launched Box Cricket exclusively for M!CE groups on the Genting Dream, which departs three times a week from Singapore to Penang and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. “Resorts World Cruises is delighted to announce that Box Cricket is now available upon request for our Fly-Cruise M!CE guests. A friendly match of Box Cricket at sea will be an exciting activity that is suitable for any type of M!CE events to be held on the Genting Dream,” said **Naresh Rawal**, Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Resorts World Cruises.



## Singapore hosts biggest SBI Life Insurance's M!CE trip

SBI's Life Insurance's "Jewel of the Crown" trip to Singapore is one of the largest incentive groups hosted in Singapore this year which took place in September 2022 involving more than 2,400 dealers, partners and staff of SBI Life Insurance.

The trip was supported by the Singapore Tourism Board through the Business Events in Singapore assistance scheme which encourages innovation and anchoring of quality business events in Singapore.

**G B Srithar**, Regional Director, India, Middle East & South Asia, Singapore Tourism Board, said, "I thank Mahesh Kumar Sharma, MD and CEO, SBI Life Insurance for selecting Singapore for this monumental Jewel of the Crown program. It is the largest M!CE movement

to Singapore post-pandemic and sends a strong signal that Singapore is back in business to tap India's growing outbound M!CE travel market."

Participants were delighted with the hospitality through a well-planned four-day program that offered them a memorable experience in Singapore with a gala event at the Marina Bay Sands.

**Prem Vidyarthi**, Chief Operating Officer, SBI Life Insurance, said, "We had a fantastic time in Singapore. In the last few days, we visited Universal Studios Singapore, Little India, Night Safari and many other attractions. It is heartening to see that tourism in Singapore is making a strong recovery. Thank you Singapore Tourism Board for your great support to SBI Life Insurance."



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# ‘Innovation played key role in M!CE revival’

Pandemic created more demand for M!CE sector and with travel thriving post-pandemic, it will further stimulate sector offering wide-ranging incentives to travelers, opines **Benazir Nazar**, CEO, Akbar Travels.

## MT Bureau

### What are the new challenges and opportunities that the pandemic brought along?

During the pandemic, World Heritage properties were closed, which then had social and economic consequences not only on the communities that live in and around these sites, but also over global tourism and travel agents. To cover up losses faced by the tourism industry post-pandemic, the sector took the opportunity to revise pricing of accommodations as well as the

path to recovery and redemption for M!CE. During the pandemic, the world witnessed how offline was no longer possible, thus live events were canceled and venue spaces were emptied out. There was also the need to overcome the obstacles faced in transitioning to virtual platforms. However, owing to the creative solutions brought out by individuals within organizations, selling was difficult but not impossible. In a world where M!CE meant print outs, COVID taught us to go digital.

Digitalization and technology played an essential role in M!CE operations, which improved productivity and cost-effectiveness through e-payments, automated attendee registration, business matching and meeting scheduling, database management, security, traffic management, and real-time dissemination of conference and event content.

**Your team recently accomplished one of the biggest M!CE groups for SBI Life Insurance to Singapore with approx. 2400 pax. Tell us about this achievement.**

I would say that our key points in accomplishing such an achievement were thorough planning, managing client expectation and a well-established communication network. The only challenge we did face was not enough manpower on ground at the hotels. However, we had 60 Tour Managers on ground in addition to seven pre-committee members to make sure

was planned systematically. In fact, we slotted the groups and fixed timings to avoid crowding and rush at each spot that assisted us in having a great control over the event.

### How has the pandemic tweaked or changed the M!CE business?

The pandemic has created more M!CE demand. With travel booming in a post-pandemic world, offering incentives to travelers—it further boosts M!CE tourism. Another strategy would be to offer M!CE clients an all-inclusive package since most of them prefer a completely planned trip by the travel company instead of doing the bookings themselves. In fact, some of them who meet their targets, travel an average of 4-5 tours every year.



**BENAZIR NAZAR**  
CEO, Akbar Travels

## DIGITALIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY PLAYED AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN M!CE OPERATIONS

### CHECKLIST FOR BIG MICE GROUPS

- ◆ Destination
- ◆ Visa flexibility
- ◆ Attractions
- ◆ Transport
- ◆ Menu (restaurants)
- ◆ Safety
- ◆ Deciding on dates
- ◆ Accommodations (if an overnight stay is required)
- ◆ Activities (if the trip is more than two days)
- ◆ Event reservations
- ◆ Personal dietary requirements
- ◆ Confirm the essentials are in order

everything was in place. We also managed to book multiple hotels and flights to successfully accommodate the entire group. Thus, with our processes in place and excellent coordination by the staff through precise diversification of roles, everything

Now that everything has opened back again, we will see clients traveling under the same curated itinerary they are used to, as they feel safe to travel and their minds are at ease knowing that every need is met, including our new medical tourism brand, Travocure.

### MICE GROUPS OPERATED BY AKBAR TRAVELS IN 2022


- ▶ Hyderabad: 2200 pax
- ▶ Agra: 3500 pax
- ▶ Goa: 800 pax
- ▶ Thailand: 1500 pax
- ▶ Singapore: 2500 pax
- ▶ Abu Dhabi & Dubai: 1500 pax

airline fare and flight bookings. However, we definitely have the booming travel to thank, as we have seen even more travelers travel in a post-pandemic world, averaging the costs to almost that of what they were pre-pandemic. Another good that the pandemic brought was to help the tourism sector shift its focus to resilience, sustainability and interconnectedness.

### What have been the strongest takeaways for the M!CE sector on the path to recovery?

In my opinion, innovation was the



An aerial photograph of Sydney, Australia, featuring the Sydney Harbour Bridge on the left, the city skyline, and the harbour water. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

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# M!CE back in business and moving forward

Year 2022 gave much-needed momentum to M!CE industry after pandemic slowdown, observe industry experts and express confidence that 2023 will provide further impetus to the industry.

**Charmaine Fernz**

The year 2022 has been a mixed bag for several industries—for many it was revival but for some, it was sustenance or even a metamorphosis of business strategies. The hospitality industry witnessed a sigh of relief with borders opening up and travel restarting. The M!CE industry in many ways saw positive effects from the revival of the travel, tourism, aviation and hospitality industries. The number was rising positively giving hope from a dark phase.

**G B Srithar**, Regional Director, India, Middle East, South Asia and Africa, Singapore Tourism Board explains the positive performance of the year slowly closing in. He says India is a key source market for inbound tourism into Singapore. Pre-COVID, for five years until 2019, Singapore welcomed more than one million visitors each year from India. In 2019, India accounted for 1.42



**G B SRITHAR**  
Regional Director, India, Middle East, South Asia and Africa, Singapore Tourism Board

**SINGAPORE TOURISM ANTICIPATES A FULL RECOVERY OF THE M!CE INDUSTRY WITHIN TWO TO THREE YEARS**

million visitors to Singapore and was the third largest visitor source market for Singapore.

“The M!CE industry in Singapore is on a path to recovery, following the city’s reopening to fully vaccinated visitors with no quarantine and testing requirements since April 2022. Year-to-date, more than half a million Indian travelers have visited Singapore,” adds Srithar.

He further emphasises that Singapore Tourism Board anticipates a full recovery of the M!CE industry within two to three years: Singapore hosted more than 200 events and some 49,000 delegates in 2021, and in the first three months of this year alone recorded more than 150 events and 37,000 delegates. For the rest of the year, the number is expected to increase with at least 66 more international events on the books.

“For the Indian market, we have seen strong demand as well. We have been receiving

Meeting & Incentive (M&I) groups, ranging from small to large numbers. In September 2022, we welcomed two large corporate groups with more than 2,400 delegates. These M&I movements help grow confidence among Indian corporates to stage their programmes in Singapore. The country will continue to strengthen its position as the Global-Asia node for high-quality business events and a thought leader for M!CE innovation. The M!CE industry is forward-thinking and will continue to develop new and sustainable solutions that appeal to the M!CE traveler of the future,” he adds.

Sharing a similar optimism, **S D Nandakumar**, President & Country Head – Corporate Tours, SOTC Travel says the second half of the calendar year has seen a rebound of international M!CE travel. With unspent budgets and strong travel desire, there was a substantial increase in group sizes versus pre-pandemic





levels. To enhance sales and productivity, we witnessed more corporates encouraging incentive trips for their key growth contributors this year, i.e. employees and distributors.

“Our team was quick to seize the opportunity, deliver the requirements of all our corporate customers and successfully delivered large group sizes to not only long-haul destinations such as Australia and Europe but also short-haul destinations such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia including international cruises. Our most recent groups had 3,000 passengers for Abu Dhabi and 1,800 passengers for Dubai and our robust forward pipeline indicates a strong and growing appetite for M!CE travel. We have already operated over 8,000 passengers to Dubai-Abu Dhabi, 4,000 passengers to Thailand and 1,000 passengers to Singapore,” adds Nandkumar.

The year has also seen significant success in pan-India events and we have successfully managed large domestic groups.

Commenting from a post-pandemic view, **Deepak Rajawat**, Chief Commercial Officer, Vistara says that while the world has realised the benefits of virtual meetings in the past two years, physical interactions are hard to be replaced, and as the situation returns to normalcy, there will be further strengthening of demand for the M!CE segment in the coming months and years.

### CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

The numbers are a testament to the revival of the industry across sectors. However, the pandemic made businesses realise the potential of technology. Boundaries were blurred and businesses were forced to think ‘out of the



**S D NANDAKUMAR**  
President & Country Head  
– Corporate Tours,  
SOTC Travel

## OUR ROBUST FORWARD PIPELINE INDICATES A STRONG AND GROWING APPETITE FOR M!CE TRAVEL

box’ for strategies to stay afloat and survive. As Nandkumar explains the pandemic has changed traditional perceptions of M!CE travel. We are witnessing a change in consumer preferences, and our data indicates that corporates are now choosing to merge various elements of M!CE into one—this is popularly known as the ‘Meetings Industry’.

Getting into details, **Meera Charnalia** – Sr. Vice President and Head –M!CE, Thomas Cook (India) Ltd asserts that with the reopening of destinations and positive travel sentiments, physical events were back and hence they are being preferred over virtual events. “We have

operated group sizes ranging from 50–2,000 with budgets as high as over ₹4-5 lakh per person for premium groups—showing a clear appetite for M!CE spends,” she adds.

Charnalia further explains that what is interesting is that corporates are showing interest in visa-friendly options. “We have operated groups to Thailand where we have managed over 2,500 delegates recently, also UAE with approximately 2,000 passengers and a robust demand for Turkey (over 1,800 passengers). We have also operated groups to Australia (over 650 passengers) and South Africa (over 600 passengers) with additional groups in the pipeline. What is noteworthy is that despite visa challenges, given the allure of Europe, we have managed over 5,000 passengers to Switzerland, France, Italy and Hungary and have several movements in the pipeline. In light of sporting events like the cricket bonanza in Australia, we had corporate groups of 100–1,000 travelers; also a large group for World

### Top international destinations for M!CE in 2023

- Australia
- France
- Poland
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Dubai-Abu Dhabi
- Malaysia
- Switzerland

Cup to Qatar and a group to the UK for India-England Cricket match.

Rajawat shares a similar view stating that people have re-started traveling freely now after

almost two years of travel restrictions. The majority of the increase in demand can be categorised under the leisure and VFR travel segments, however, a gradual uptick can be observed for corporate, and M!CE travel as well. Corporate/M!CE travel is mostly concentrated on certain popular metro routes in India and popular leisure

destinations across the globe. We also observe a growing preference for direct, non-stop connectivity for long-haul international destinations as customers want to avoid transiting through other countries for various reasons including saving travel time.

Talking about the new mantra—sustainability—Srithar states that as consumers become more aware of the impact of their purchases, travel and meetings



**DEEPAK RAJAWAT**  
Chief Commercial Officer,  
Vistara

## WE ARE NOTICING AN INCREASED DEMAND FOR OUR PREMIUM CABINS, ESPECIALLY FOR CORPORATE AND M!CE TRAVEL

professionals are demanding more sustainable options when planning business events. A sustainable supply chain is also a major consideration, with 70 per cent of travel and meetings professionals placing high or medium importance on green certifications and credentials when selecting a supplier.

### THE MAJOR PLAYERS

M!CE has picked up and picked up for good.

**NEW HOT SPOTS**

- ▶ Ras Al-Khaimah (UAE)
- ▶ Jeju Island (South Korea)
- ▶ Hanoi (Vietnam)

However, not every industry is using events to gain lost business. There are some existing industries or even new segments that have picked up speed in the year so far. As Srithar explains, Singapore continues to be recognised as the preferred destination for business events, even amid intensified global competition. We have seen an interest in Singapore as a M!CE destination across various sectors/industries such as pharma, food & beverage, technology and conferences among many others.

Putting the spotlight on the Indian market, Srithar claims that India is one of the major markets for Singapore. With more than a half million Indian tourists arriving in Singapore by October 2022, India is the second largest visitor source. Currently, Singapore has direct air connections from 15 Indian cities, and this is set to increase to 16 with direct flight connection between Pune and Singapore from December 2022.

Post-pandemic sectors such as pharmaceutical, technology, insurance, and consumer goods have been quick to bounce back with overseas M&I movements. These sectors are likely to continue contributing a steady stream of M&I movements to Singapore in 2023.

Rajawat sharing his perspective from an airline said that we are noticing an increased demand for our premium cabins,



**MEERA CHARNALIA**  
Sr. Vice President and  
Head-M!CE, Thomas Cook  
(India) Ltd

**WE HAVE OPERATED GROUPS TO THAILAND WHERE WE HAVE MANAGED OVER 2,500 DELEGATES RECENTLY**

especially for corporate and M!CE travel. Industries like insurance and manufacturing have been the most proactive while banking and financial institutions are expected to be the upcoming leading sectors for M!CE.

Charnalia sees a different perspective saying demand trends indicate an increasing preference for unique experiences like a Bustronomie ride in Paris and London—an extravagant party bus with food and drinks under a 360° panoramic glass-topped roof; exciting team-building activities such as archery, barrel rolling in addition to a wine tasting at a winery festival and even an exclusive flash mob in the middle of Trafalgar Square for a group.

With a growing appetite for luxury experiences and increased spending, the

company has successfully managed premium groups with delegates comprising global business heads; stays at uber-luxury hotels such as Waldorf Astoria, Renaissance and Pullman Montparnasse in Paris and Shangri-La The Shard in London; exclusive experiences including dining at a Michelin star restaurant and flying in a vintage plane (1940s plane); a sundowner cruise over viewing an exquisite scenery and special Harley-Davidson rides in Cape Town, South Africa; also Helicopter rides with 360° panoramic views in Australia and South Africa.

“The cruise opportunity represents an attractive value proposition for corporate M!CE. We have recently managed a group of over 600 delegates for Italy on the cruise. Popular international cruise liners include Mediterranean cruises, Scandinavian Cruises, Royal Caribbean

**DOMESTIC PREFERENCES IN M!CE FOR 2023**

- ◆ Goa
- ◆ Jaipur
- ◆ Kochi
- ◆ Puri

Cruises to the Bahamas and Singapore roundtrip via Malaysia on Genting Dream Cruises; cruises from Europe, Singapore and UAE are also back in demand,” she adds.

Nandkumar too feels that certain industries take precedence in M!CE. “We have witnessed strong growth in our business, especially from segments such as automobile, cement and Finance. Well into the seventh month of the financial year, we have exceeded our targets. Our robust pipeline for 2023 indicates strong interest from sectors such as Insurance, Steel and Paint,” he observes.

**KEY TRENDS FOR 2023**

The optimism of 2022 will certainly continue in 2023 but with more vigour. As Nandkumar states we foresee higher spending by corporates who are willing to increase their budgets by 10–20 per cent, unique destinations and locations as now corporate customers are opting for off-beat destinations for M!CE travel, sustainability and mindful travel are also seeing strong interest, interactive gamification in events, health and wellness; a special interest in environment-focused responsibility.

Charnalia sharing the same view says with a strong appetite for M!CE travel, the year 2023 will be the year of M!CE. We are looking forward to easing current visa challenges and our 2023 pipeline indicates strong demand for M!CE, adds Charnalia.

Srithar concludes by stating that the industry is seeing a strong resurgence in demand for leisure and M!CE tourism, with Indian consumers looking forward to traveling again with new and renewed experiences. As consumers become more aware of the impact of their purchases, travel and meetings professionals are demanding more sustainable options when planning business events. There will be an increase in sustainable travel. Sustainability is now a top-of-mind concern for many travelers. There will also be a shift in travelers’ priorities.



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# India will embrace 'Guest is God' culture in G20: PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi outlines that G20 Presidency is not merely a diplomatic meeting for India, it is a new responsibility and a measure of world's trust in India.

MT Bureau

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the logo, theme and website of India's G20 Presidency through a video conference recently. "From 1 December 2022, India will preside over the G20 Summit, which is a historic opportunity for the country. G20 is the premier forum for international economic cooperation representing around 85 per cent of the global GDP, over 75 per cent of the worldwide trade, and about two-thirds of the world population," he said.

Applauding India's efforts in the field of sustainable development, he said, "We must make sustainable development a part of individual life rather than just a system of governments. The environment is a global cause for us as well as personal responsibility." He



**NARENDRA MODI**  
Prime Minister, India

**THE EVENTS RELATED TO G20 WILL NOT BE LIMITED TO DELHI OR A FEW PLACES, BUT PROGRAMMES WILL BE HELD IN EVERY CORNER OF THE COUNTRY**



also highlighted the contribution of Ayurveda and global enthusiasm for Yoga and coarse grains.

He also pointed out that G20 is not only an event of the central government and requested the state governments, as well as all the political parties, to actively take part in this endeavour. "The event is organised by Indians and the G20 is a great opportunity for us to showcase a glimpse of our tradition of 'Guest is God'. The events related to G20 will not be limited to Delhi or a few places, but programmes will be held in every corner of the country. Each of our states has its own characteristics, heritage, culture, beauty, aura and hospitality," he shared. He also gave examples of the hospitality of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu,

Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and remarked that it is this hospitality and diversity that amazes the world. The G20 logo juxtaposes planet Earth with the lotus, India's national flower that reflects growth amid challenges. The Earth reflects India's pro-planet approach to life, one in perfect harmony with nature. Below the G20 logo is "Bharat" written in the Devanagari script. The logo draws inspiration from the vibrant colours of India's national flag. The theme of India's G20 Presidency "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth, One Family, One Future" is drawn from the ancient Sanskrit text of the Maha Upanishad. The theme affirms the value of all life – human, animal, plant, and microorganisms – and their interconnectedness on the planet Earth.





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# Firm and decisive

Ministry of Tourism recently announced that a dedicated fund of ₹50 crore will be earmarked for M!CE vertical under aegis of National Tourism Board of India.

**Nisha Verma**

In a major push to M!CE tourism in India, the Ministry of Tourism has announced that the National Tourism Board of India (NTBI) will earmark a dedicated fund of ₹50 crore for M!CE vertical, which will be utilised for incentivising organisations and associations for getting events in India.

“NTBI will have a separate M!CE Vertical plus dedicated M!CE promotion for India,” informed **Rakesh Verma**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.

Verma further explained, “There is a huge set of events that have never happened in India. Thus, we are trying to put dedicated funding support and professional support for them to facilitate them, to organize the site visits and incentivise them. This would also include social events, which should be recognised as well.”



**RAKESH VERMA**  
Additional Secretary,  
Ministry of Tourism

**NTBI WILL HAVE  
A SEPARATE  
M!CE VERTICAL  
PLUS DEDICATED  
M!CE PROMOTION  
FOR INDIA**

## NEED FOR NTBI

Saying that the country’s brand must be established by the government, Verma said, “The ministerial formations are good for policy making, strategy and oversight, but for operational reasons, dedicated organisation is needed. That is where this demand to set up NTBI was there for a long time. Now we seem to be reaching there,” Verma said.

Adding further, he shared, “This dedicated organisation will have a very dynamic and professional workforce. It will have operational autonomy to further the overseas marketing in the true spirit. The board will have flexibility to work with the industry more closely than what the Ministry of Tourism can directly do. Most of the countries already have such boards and we are joining this club much later. We looked at national tourism boards of some

important destinations to see their structure, divisions, manpower and funding. Based on that, we picked up best practices for NTBI.”

## OBJECTIVES

The very reason and essence of setting up this board is to enhance the contribution of tourism, enhance market share, both in terms of usual tourism but also M!CE and position our destinations in overseas markets, Verma claimed. “Thus, complete management of Incredible India brand will be with the board. Apart from the formation of the board, we have suggested an integrated marketing strategy, which will be implemented through this board, focusing on India as a year-round world class tourist destination. This board will be engaging with Indian missions abroad, Indian diaspora and with market representation agencies,” he said.



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# Expert discourse

Invigorating panel discussion at Wedding Travel Show' 22 brought to limelight significant agendas and challenges that are paramount in wedding business.

**Lipla Negi**

**M**atchmaking in a wedding is not just restricted to pairing the bride and groom. For a successful wedding or to say, a 'larger-than-life' wedding celebration, matchmaking of a wedding planner and a hotel (venue) is also equally important. Coupling the two driving forces of the industry at the Wedding Travel Show 2022, the panel on 'Confluence of Wedding & Hotel industries' saw a lively discussion with panelists Arif Patel, CCO, ITC Hotels and Chetan Vohra, MD, Weddingline, craftly moderated by Rajeev Jain, Founder & MD, Rashi Entertainment. Hosted at Hyatt Regency Dehradun, the show witnessed the country's top wedding planners, hotels, airlines and tourism boards in attendance.

Describing the relationship between wedding service agencies and hotels, Jain quipped, "It is like—we cannot live with or



**RAJEEV JAIN**  
Founder & MD,  
Rashi Entertainment

**WEDDING AGENCIES COMPLAIN THAT HOTELS DO NOT TREAT THEM AS EQUAL PARTNERS**

without each other—a typical husband and wife relationship." He began the session by laying out the key matters that act as 'bone of contention' between wedding agencies and hotels. "The hotels complain about wedding agencies taking rates from 20 different hotels and then finally giving the business to none or one. On the other hand, agencies complain that hotels do not treat them as equal partners and make them pay for even the smallest things like tea and coffee for their staff," he revealed.

**PRICE PARITY TOP PRIORITY**

On being asked about transparency in prices and commission to the agencies, Patel said, "In the organized sectors, everybody understands 'pricing parity'. We also understand that commission is the cost of doing the business. While airlines and many other sectors have

stopped paying commissions, we (hotels) are still paying standard commission, considering it as your (wedding agencies) birthright." He further explained that larger hotel chains with proper revenue management streams and culture of collaboration form 65–75 per cent rooms in the country. However, there are still 35–40 per cent unstructured, fragmented hotels in India, driven by individuals and not by professionals. But in due course of time, these hotels will also learn how to run the business. "It is a process that will take some time to become a standard practice. Today, you will rarely find that a lead has come from a wedding partner, and then end-user at the hotel, and a discount is happening," he shared.

Highlighting some of the common practices followed by hotels to ensure transparency and pricing parity, he informed that hotels nowadays ask for the







**ARIF PATEL**  
CCO, ITC Hotels

**WE NEVER TRY TO UNDERCUT OUR PARTNERS. WE NEVER WANT TO CREATE ENEMIES BY GIVING DIFFERENT RATES TO FIVE DIFFERENT PLANNERS**

names of bride and groom and wedding dates. On the question of hotels leaking the client leads that wedding planners share, Patel responded, “Once we get the names and dates, we maintain a complete price parity. For example, last week, a groom approached us via five different wedding planners. So, we decided to leave it on the groom to choose his wedding agency. But we will maintain a price parity with all five planners. Commission, if there is any, is strictly a hotel and planner’s business and the client has nothing to do with it,” he revealed. Advising wedding planners to share details of wedding dates, he stated that “we never try to undercut our partners. We never want to create enemies by giving different rates to five different planners.”

Sharing his standpoint about price parity, Vohra said, “This is something we have personally experienced in the past. We

shared a query with a hotel and a few hours later got to know that another wedding agency, which was never in the picture, got in touch with the client directly, and negotiated the wedding planning offering them competitive prices. So, it is not just about price parity. Hotels should work towards protecting the details of the client.”

**POWER OF COLLABORATION**

Roping in Harkaran Singh, GM, Hyatt Regency Dehradun, the panelists collectively emphasized the power of collaboration. Adding on, Singh said, “Sometimes the agencies also do ‘rate shopping’ by giving fake names of bride and groom, which confuses us too.” Agreeing to what Singh pointed out, Jain advised the wedding planners in the audience to always give the right names of bride and groom to the hotel “and make them ‘partners’ and not competitors,” he underlined the takeaway lesson from the invigorating session. Crediting ‘creativity’ of the wedding planner as the top strategy as well as skill, Patel stated that planners who are at the top of their game never lose business due to rates. “The rates do not matter when your work is phenomenal. Delivering unique experiences is the most important thing for families. I do not think families mind the 5 or 10 per cent rate difference.” The panel unanimously agreed on the fact that if both parties approach this from a partnership perspective, it creates a win-win situation for all.

“I have been doing weddings with ITC for 20 years and the relationship has given us the confidence to be flexible where we could and put our foot down in front of the client where we could not. So, it is crucial to build an understanding,” opined Vohra. While revisiting the run-up days to famous Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas nuptials, he added that “doing a 7-tier wedding cake as high as the central dome of

Umaid Bhawan Palace would not have been possible without the team of the Taj Hotels”.

**COMPLIANCE CHALLENGES**

Under Section 52 Z(a) of the Copyright Act, any religious ceremony, including a marriage ceremony does not require to take PPL (Public Performance License), IPRS (Indian Performing Right Society Limited) or any other such copyright license. However, as Jain pointed out “many times the banquet managers of hotels inform the PPL and IPRS officials about the wedding ceremony taking place. Now the officials arrive at the very moment when we are about to play the sound. Can hotels help us with this?” he asked hoteliers present in the room.

In response to his question, Singh said, “If there are any state or central-level compliances that must be followed then the hotel cannot do anything about it because hoteliers also have to run the hotel, and nobody wants to get into any non-compliance trouble and put the entire hotel at stake. The state mandates

have to be followed.” Speaking on the matter, Patel suggested that the matter of compliance and licenses should be properly taken up with the concerned ministries in order to change the situation on ground. “No hotelier wants to take a risk when it comes to compliances,” he appealed.

**IT IS ONE TEAM**

The hoteliers and planners unanimously agreed upon making ‘Har Din Shubh Hai’ (every day is auspicious) a common practice in the wedding industry. “Over 5 crore weddings in just 40 days create demand-supply imbalance, resulting in skyrocketing costs. It happens in commodities and perishables,” said Patel, while advising planners to convince their clients to look beyond the 40-days bracket if they want good prices, “I always say ‘Your date, My rate. My date, your rate’. It makes logical sense.” Referring to ‘peaks and valleys’ business theory, Patel further made his offer straight and clear, “if a wedding agency gives us business that helps us cover our ‘valley’ days, we will give you a superb rate. In case you cannot do that, do not complain about rates.” In addition, he advised the agencies “to buy brands and not rates. Buy experiences and not rates. We are all together in this.”

Reminiscing the time when agencies used to command the pricing, Vohra highlighted that the pandemic has changed the business. For a better understanding of the audience, he further listed out the shortcomings of wedding agencies, while advising his fraternity, “not to lose sight of who they are and what is their primary role in a wedding”. In a frank response to the issue of taking ‘rates’ from multiple hotels, he explained, “We all are in this business to make money. Yes, we take rates from four different hotels and sometimes, it is the fifth that is hungrier for our business, and more flexible in accommodating our clients’ demands.”



**CHETAN VOHRA**  
MD, Weddingline

**HOTELS SHOULD WORK TOWARDS PROTECTING THE DETAILS OF THE CLIENT**







## Exhibitors



### **Khalid Mohamed Said Al Azri**

**Director of Tourism Trends Department, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Sultanate of Oman**

This is the type of show which one should attend where you can make good use of time and resources. We had some functions, meetings, and informative discussions. Talking about the Indian market, it is the most targeted market for Oman. We have plenty of things to be offered to the Indian market. We have 2-3 direct flights from Oman to India.

### **Emre Kirazci**

**Director of Operations, Sales & Marketing, Sofitel Hotels & Resorts, Kingdom of Bahrain**

I have been in Bahrain for the last five years. Flexibility is our last name. We do not have no in our literature. We tend to be one stop shop for all our families and wedding planners. We always take care of our wedding planners. Word of mouth is our biggest tool. The testimonials of the families are our biggest tool. We love India as it offers great hospitality, and we try to imitate same hospitality to the friends in terms of food as well as the hospitality.



### **Renjie Wong**

**Area Director, India, South Asia & Middle East (Mumbai), Singapore Tourism Board**

Singapore is one of the destinations that has been so dynamic and that has been our strength when it comes to Indian wedding. Every single wedding is going to be different from the last one. Singapore Tourism Board always stand ready to support clients important wedding planners in getting the best hotels, getting best experiences for your clients. So, whether it is visa entry or in terms of on ground securing the best hotels, we deliver the best.

### **Harkaran Singh**

**General Manager, Hyatt Regency, Dehradun**

Post-pandemic, it has been the need-of-the-hour, and everybody is craving for personal connections and meet each other and understand each other's perspective. This event gets everybody together at one platform and you talk out what you want. India is offering the facilities. You do not need to travel too far. Wedding fraternity and communities are linked together. You want to do marriage better than the previous one. That is why the whole differentiation comes in. The whole idea of taking the marriage comes in.



### **Ameet Raj Kundu**

**Cluster Commercial Head, Radisson Blu Resort Temple Bay Mamallapuram**

We are still having boutique weddings when people are comprising 100 guests together. But people are also looking at bigger weddings where 2,000 people are attending the wedding. So, the trend was limited post-pandemic but right now for next two years there is no limitation to choose their venues and their destination as per their size as they wish to.

### **Monica Sharma**

**Associate Vice President, Sales, Heritage Village Resorts & Spa**

Manesar has been a traditionally prime location for weddings since 2003-2004. It has been there. Over 2-3 years, we have seen increase in demand not in upper communities but in middle class and upper-middle class also. People want to do destination weddings during COVID and post-COVID era where people have realized that even if they want to bring in 100 to 150 people, it is ideal to place them at a destination instead of 1,000 people.



### **Sameer K Sharma**

**Manager, India, M!CE, Premium & Groups, Oman Air**

We have done lots of weddings in Oman and in future also we have already planned. We are operating from eight cities. As a wedding player perspective, so it is your group travelling from India. So, people travel from Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai and are arriving at the same time. That is the advantage from our side. We provide dedicated in-flight services, check in and other value-added services.





### **Sarabjeet Singh Sethi**

Director, Sales, Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity, New Delhi

It was the wonderful experience. We came across many of the exhibitors and it is growing in numbers. It is an industry on its own. I am looking forward to the wedding season ahead.

### **Harshita Vohra**

Director, Sales and Marketing, Royal Orchid and Regenta Hotels

Trends have changed. People mindsets have also changed. Earlier, they were going to only prominent places such as Goa. Right now, the trends have changed. They want to experience experiential products. There are lots of religious places that people want to go out. There is place called Ukhimath. The Gauri ma has taken *sath pheras* there. People loved this concept, and they go there and do their wedding there.



### **Manoj Dubey**

Senior Director, Sales and Marketing, Alcon Victor Group

This is actually the right platform where the buyer and exhibitor meet each other. We are looking for some good traction from the show. There is no major shift that has happened due to pandemic. But one thing I can see in terms of weddings is sort of buyout weddings coming into the picture. People prefer buyout weddings. This is a good trend for the hotels which have got large inventories. We are seeing this for more than two years. Lots of demand is coming for buyout weddings which is actually good for hoteliers.

### **Himanshu Bahuguna**

Associate Director, Sales, Radisson Blu Hotel Amritsar

I and my colleague both participated in this event. This event is actually very good, and it is a single platform where we get to know so many wedding planners. This is a very good platform. The meetings we had here are very fruitful to us especially when we talk about Mussoorie. So, we got very good feedback and clientele.



### **Ankur Rara Jethlia**

General Manager, The Raj Palace

Previously, people were looking for bigger hotels. The wedding sizes were 250-300 people. After the COVID, things have changed. The smaller number of guests, smaller events. Weddings have become of smaller sizes. This is the major shift which has come. This is the idea which has been taken very aptly. This is good.

### **Romana Parvi**

Regional Manager, South Asia, Jazeera Airways

Post-COVID, people are very keen to explore new ideas, new destinations. Basically, they are ready to experiment. Pre-COVID there were some kind of reservations. Post-COVID, it has opened up big time. And of course, in terms of regions, Saudi is moving, Middle East is moving, down south Maldives is moving, Europe is moving. Budgets are going high. Customers have become more experiential and ready to basically experiment.



### **Nalini Udai Gupta**

Managing Director, GSA Lotus Aero Enterprises

More than the wedding trend, I am seeing the celebration trend. People are finding new ways to celebrate it. There is lots of demand. What I saw that people who do very well are the people who response quickly or so show some flexibility.

## Wedding Planners

**Rajeev Jain**  
Founder & MD, Rashi Entertainment



The weddings have grown larger than life. The revenge buying is taking place in the country now. For two years, people did nothing so as a result they are spending more money on the budgets in this season. Hotels are increasing rates humoungously in 'saayas'. That is why we are promoting these. All 365 days are pious for Indian weddings.

**Chetan Vohra**  
Director, Weddingline Events & Hospitality



What happened that mindsets have changed. People have realized that smaller weddings are in. You do not need to call 5,000, 6,000, and 7,000 people. People are happy to call 200, 300, and 400 people. People have become more conscious due to COVID.

**Rahul Gaur**  
Founder, RGE Signature Weddings



Personally, I really like them because the content and the travel agencies usually they get here are amazing and personally I was looking forward to Oman Tourism which I met them here. People are looking to move out India for weddings. Honestly, because India is getting costlier in terms of hotels as they are absolutely increasing their prices.

**Shrawan Kumar Yadav**  
Director, Shubb Muhurat Luxury Weddings



For last two years, people have gone intimate. People have started focusing on their people then sending 1,000 people. They want to take people abroad to take experience for them rather than inviting 1,000 people there. This is the observation I have seen during last two years.

**Neeraj Kumar**  
Founder & CEO, Le Magnifique Weddings



We have been looking out for stepping out of India and going to other parts of Asia and we have got very good partners in terms of Bahrain and Singapore. The young couples want to show their weddings. Hashtags has got the eye of the nation. Couples have become more technologically enabled.

**Nanki Chawla**  
Founder, Nanki Chawla Events



Going forward, our clients are becoming more discerning, they want more customization, they want more unique experiences which we are all have to start gearing up. How can we make Indian weddings different from all aspects. Every one has come back with so much enthusiasm and energy and everyone willing to push their boundaries and experience new things.

**Abhishek Poddar**  
Owner and CEO, Colossal Weddings and Events



This travel show is a great platform where lots of exhibitors and tourism boards are coming across and connect with them and we can know more about new products as well. Mostly we are looking forward to the tourism boards such as Singapore Tourism and Oman Tourism.

**Rohit Saini**  
Director, Rudra Events & Wedding Planner



My experience is very nice. After four years, I am attending this show. The whole experience is totally wow. Oman is a big thing for me. I am already doing one wedding in a month of March next year. Client is looking for some destinations like out of the box things. So, I have got lots of new hotels, different destinations connecting with this show.

**Aparajita**  
HOD Sales and Digital Marketing, Theme Weavers Designs



I am really interested in Bahrain and Oman. As I told you that we create luxury. So, there are so many experiences we can look forward to and collaborate. We strike at the right direction and the relationship grows manifolds from here. There is a trend we have seen that people want to marry at the hills.

**Ankit N Rao**  
Founder, ANR Weddings & Events



We have been meeting people, especially during B2B networking, where we have met 15-16 exhibitors from tourism to hotels and different airlines and likewise met all industry people. Meeting with the tourism boards have always been something very special for any wedding planner because when we are thinking to plan something especially for abroad, the tourism board and their support matters a lot.

**Deep Agrawal**  
Director, Royal Wedding Planners



Post-COVID, I have seen the trend that people are more keen to move abroad. Because the pricing in India post-COVID has been exuberant. Countries outside India are providing with many competitive rates and good hospitalities and good rates. Thailand was always very popular. Tourism boards of Qatar, Oman and Singapore are very good.

**Pradeep Jaiswani**  
CEO, The Stage Craft



Earlier, my client base was from India. They wanted to do destination weddings in Rajasthan, Chennai, and Gujarat also. But they want to explore outside India also. With the help of DDPPL, we met with Sofitel, Oman. So, now we can explore there, and we can take our clients to visit the property and we can see how we can work it out. When we talk about budgets, so it is somewhat similar.



**Ashok Kumar Jeph**  
Director, VenuePlanner.Live



There have been lot of shifts and demands. After COVID, lots of things have been changed. When you say about big Indian weddings everybody knows very well that the culture has been changed. People are looking for very big number of weddings. And that is good. I do not think there has been any special change.

**Mahesh Puransingh Verma**  
Founder & Managing Director, For You Group of Companies



I had one of the best experiences. We have been to many platforms and similar platforms. Philippines is a beautiful destination. Good push needs to be done between Philippines and India. Beautiful beaches attract lots of Indians. If proper marketing is done, Philippines could be better destination.

**Garima Kumar**  
CEO, Garima Kumar Weddings & Wellness



As always it has been a great experience. The idea was to discuss business and go back to networking the way it was pre-COVID. The biggest trend I have seen is intimate weddings. It was not really appreciated by the Indian market initially but right now I see everybody adapting to it. The larger hotels as well as smaller hotels.

**Varun Madaan**  
Founder, Vivaah Makers



It has been terrific and wonderful to meet new people. We have been learning a lot. We have been meeting different people from different countries and overall experience has been fabulous. We see lots of shift. Earlier, we have 300-400 people travelling for a wedding. Now we see boutique weddings where we have 100 to 200 people wedding. But I believe in the future, I see same genre repeating.

**Raghubir R Singh**  
MD, BMP Weddings



Now the destination wedding size have become smaller after post-COVID. Earlier, people used to take 1,000 people. The destination weddings have gone up. All have registered growth. Wedding planners have registered growth. Destination weddings have registered growth.

**Ruchika Arora Bansal**  
Co-founder, Plush Weddings



2021-2022 and 2022-2023 are going to be biggest year for the wedding industry. The weddings are back with the bang. Things are just getting started. It is getting bigger and better. We are making sure that weddings and events are special and create great memories. So, the trust in destination weddings have increased.

**Imran Qureshi**  
Director, Planing & Sales, DreamzKrraft



The demand has increased. The shift has come where people are now ready to explore destinations than India. A lot of changes have come because pax have changed. Earlier, we used to have huge weddings. Now people are going little intimate - 2 days, 3 nights weddings.

**Minnat Lalpuria**  
Founder, CEO, 7Vachan



The huge shift I am seeing that 600-1000 people weddings are back in the market. India has fewer hotel which have 200-300 rooms which are doing extremely good weddings. Lots of people have gone internationally. We have seen huge demand when it comes to small weddings to large weddings. We have seen lots of 600 to 1,000 people weddings and for destination weddings.

**Sahil Shandilya**  
Owner, All Rise Event Management



Experience is phenomenal. We get to meet tourism departments. It is a great interactive place to expand the business. Post-COVID, destination weddings are coming in more. People want to do party more. People want to spend on small weddings. Now there are smaller weddings which comprises of 200 to 250 people. Even smaller families are all ready to do well. That is the new things I have seen.

**Vaibhav Agarwal**  
Founder, Cheers Events



It is the first time we have seen Singapore Tourism Board pitching themselves for the Indian destination weddings. The demand for boutique weddings has increased. People have travelled so they have that kind of experience. If you have certain properties, it was good to go. You need to provide a certain kind of experience. If you do not do that, the client do not get into the property.

**Sharad Mathur**  
Founder, EMG Entertainment



Post-COVID, the weddings have come up very well. All the venues and the venues for weddings have opened up. Things are coming up in bigger and better ways. People are ready to spend money. You will see huge backlog of weddings this year. New trends are coming. People are ready to explore new places. So many people have invested in new properties.

**Manas Harjai**  
Director, Indian Wedding Planners



Lots of inbound travel is happening. Lots of NRIs are coming back. Since our industry are impacted by lots of showmanship and Bollywood. Now the times have changed, Indians are trying to move out. Outbound travel and weddings are a great going impact that we are looking at. It will continue to grow.



# Fresh impetus

Hoteliers buoyant on thriving wedding season after COVID slowdown, are witnessing a huge escalation in demand for big fat Indian weddings.

**Lipla Negi**

A mix of zero COVID restrictions, pent up demand and fear of pandemic waning out is raising the hopes and possibilities of a fabulous wedding season this year. The market continues to look buoyant with big fat Indian weddings making a strong comeback. “COVID has taught people one thing—it is one life and they must enjoy it to the fullest. During the pandemic, people did not have the opportunity to host grand weddings. However, today the High Networth Individuals (HNIs) clientele that is coming to us, is back to 400–500 guest count,” reveals Rajeev Kapoor, General Manager, Fairmont Jaipur. From people traveling



**AJAY BAKAYA**  
MD, Sarovar Hotels

**NOVEMBER ONWARDS, THE M!CE BUSINESS WILL MAJORLY BE DRIVEN BY WEDDINGS**

more uninhibitedly to no capping on guest list for weddings, all the omens are pointing towards a wedding boom this year. “Physical travel is back and I see people traveling for both business and leisure. November onwards, the M!CE business will majorly be driven by weddings and I definitely see RevPAR surpassing the pre-COVID levels,” asserts Ajay Bakaya, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels. November and December are packed with ‘saaya dates’ and most of the hotels are already booked for the most auspicious wedding dates of this year. “Q4 will surely see a massive revenue jump for our wedding-positioned hotels, ideally over 25 per cent,” confirms Rajan Kalra,

Director Sales (India), Suba Group of Hotels.

**BIG FAT IS BACK**

Two years back, the pandemic had shrunk the size and scale of Indian weddings, but fortunately, it failed to diminish people’s appetite for larger-than-life wedding celebrations. “People were forced to compromise on their nuptial celebrations due to COVID outbreak. They always wanted to do large weddings. Big fat Indian weddings are not going anywhere—this is who we are,” believes Rahul Joshi, General Manager, Taj Hotel & Convention Center, Agra.

COVID nudged people to think intimate, and eventually started the





**RAJEEV KAPOOR**  
GM, Fairmont Jaipur

## THE KIND OF GUEST SERVICE AND HOSPITALITY INDIA OFFERS CANNOT BE REPLICATED ELSEWHERE

trend of smaller weddings. But not all were satisfied with an intimate affair, and thankfully such clients are gravitating back to the grand celebrations. Agrees Ameet Raj Kundu, Cluster Commercial Head, Radisson Hotels of GRT, “We are still having boutique weddings with 100 guests. But people are also looking at bigger weddings where 2,000 people are attending the wedding. So, the ‘small and intimate’ trend was limited post-pandemic. Right now, the clients can go as big as they want, and this trend will continue for the next two years.”

### BUY-OUT TREND CONTINUES

The hotels are witnessing an escalation in demand for wedding venues across locations with a significant increase in the number of room bookings and banquet sales. “Since the period from

November to February is the peak season, we have already sold out 90 per cent of these months. Only 10 per cent is left, that too for the ‘non-saaya’ or non-auspicious dates. Especially in the case of Jaipur, where an outdoor setup comes with lovely weather, most hotels are sold out to capacity, says Kapoor.

Echoing similar optimism, Atul Upadhyay, Senior Vice President, Pride Hotels Ltd., says, “We have done about 142 weddings in 2019-20. Currently, we have about 257 bookings for November to March 2022-23. Most of our banquets are all booked.” The buy-out trend, fuelled by the pandemic, continues to gain ground and attract both big and small wedding parties. “The buyout trend currently is more specific to offbeat locations and properties with limited inventory, as ‘intimate weddings’ have been a norm and trend,” says Abinash Manghani, CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels.



**ABINASH MANGHANI**  
CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels

## THE BUYOUT TREND CURRENTLY IS MORE SPECIFIC TO OFFBEAT LOCATIONS



Meanwhile, a section of industry professionals believes that while there are relatively fewer guests at ‘small and intimate’ weddings, the events come at a big-ticket price with focus on small details, storytelling through food, rewriting the rule book on wedding entertainment and more spends on additional bespoke experiences for the couple as well as the guests. “This creates opportunities for smaller inventory hotels to be a part of the bandwagon,” says Manghani.

### DOMESTIC DESTINATIONS IN DEMAND

The rising fuel prices and higher air ticket fares are turning people towards domestic wedding destinations. “With some of the usual overseas wedding destinations still struggling with post pandemic protocols, the wedding buy-out momentum continues in India. We are witnessing a continuity of business queries that started after the pandemic for this season,” informs Manghani.

However, Kapoor feels that it is the tradition of “atithi devo bhava” that strengthens India’s position in the global wedding market. “From NRIs to HNIs, our cultural diversity and rich heritage blends effortlessly with the wedding



**RAHUL JOSHI**  
GM, Taj Hotel & Convention Centre, Agra

## BIG FAT INDIAN WEDDINGS ARE NOT GOING ANYWHERE—THIS IS WHO WE ARE

sentiments of various communities across the world. Adding on to this, the kind of guest service and hospitality that we provide cannot be replicated at an international destination. We are blessed with incredible manpower as well as passion for hospitality,” he further explains. The scenic beauty and easy accessibility of domestic locations is also one of the prime reasons people are deciding to tie the knot within the country, giving a boost to the domestic destination wedding business. “The destination wedding market

is expected to witness a year-on-year growth rate of 30 per cent (approx.) in 2022-23,” reveals Mehul Sharma, Founder and CEO, Signum Hotels & Resorts. Some of the top wedding destinations include Rajasthan, Goa, Srinagar, Kerala, Shimla, Uttarakhand, and Andamans.

**BIG BUDGETS, MORE EXPERIENCE-CENTRIC**

While the wedding budgets have expanded, the hoteliers unanimously agree that the wedding expenditure has also gone up due to multiple reasons such as rise in prices of fuel, rooms, and perishable items. “Today, we see 45–50 per cent more expensive weddings,” states Kapoor, while pointing towards the demand-supply imbalance for the rising wedding cost. “There is a huge demand for big weddings, and there are very limited premium destination



**MEHUL SHARMA**  
Founder & CEO,  
Signum Hotels

**DESTINATION WEDDING MARKET IS EXPECTED TO WITNESS A GROWTH RATE OF 30% IN 2022-23**



**AMEET RAJ KUNDU**  
Cluster Commercial Head,  
Radisson Hotels of GRT

**PEOPLE ARE ALSO LOOKING AT BIGGER WEDDINGS WHERE 2,000 PEOPLE ARE ATTENDING THE WEDDING**

wedding options. For the last two years, the rates were low, and hotels also compromised on the salaries. So, now the price correctness has happened. These prices will continue

and not come down,” he declares.

However, Kapoor is quick to point out, “People are not buying prices anymore. Rather, they are buying rich, unique, and invigorating experiences.” It has been observed that today, people are preferring premium brands for weddings. “Safety and hygiene are key factors for picking premium hotels as wedding venues,” adds Joshi. As a result, the demand for good branded hotels outruns the supply.

When it comes to wedding trends, guests are looking for more personalised experiences—be it destination or city weddings. “We have curated new innovative and creative packages for our guests, which can be altered and customized according to their needs, bringing it all together under one roof, leaving them hassle-free. The demand for bespoke experiences, a heartfelt ambience and various cuisines to choose from is on the rise. Our mid-scale economy brands, Novotel and ibis are sought-after venues for city events,



**RAJAN KALRA**  
Director, Sales,  
Suba Group of Hotels

**Q4 WILL SURELY SEE A MASSIVE REVENUE JUMP FOR OUR WEDDING-POSITIONED HOTELS, IDEALLY 25% PLUS**

while Fairmont Jaipur and Raffles Udaipur are among top favoured wedding destinations in India,” says Puneet Dhawan, SVP Operations, Accor.





# PEEK INTO HISTORY THROUGH MUSEUMS



Madhya Pradesh is often called the 'heart of India', not only because it is geographically located at the centre of the country but also because it epitomizes the historical, culture and natural variety as well as the sheer antiquity of this land. Some of the oldest human and animal fossil in the world have been excavated in the Narmada valley, and the state's many rock art shelters are rich preserves of our ancestor's imaginations.

Dozens of museums across the state are aiding the efforts to document and preserve the history of Madhya Pradesh as it has come down to us in art and sculptures, pottery and fossil, jewellery and weapons. Let us have a look at a few museums of Madhya Pradesh.

## MP TRIBAL MUSEUM

Bhopal, which is also known as the 'City of Lakes,' has several museums which have a lot of unheard truth of bygone era in its folds. One of the biggest attractions here is Tribal museum. The colorful museum is being divided into six different galleries showcasing various tribes of Madhya Pradesh. The folklores, lifestyle, rituals and social customs of all seven indigenous tribes of MP- the Gonds, Bhils, Bharias, Sahariya, Korku, Kol, and Baiga are showcased in the museum through a repository of traditional art. In fact, lives of the region's seven tribes are being celebrated here via their craft. The moment you step into the galleries inside the museum, you get a strong feel about not just witnessing the galleries but a strong feeling of entering straight into the lifestyles of the tribes of Madhya Pradesh.



## INDIRA GANDHI RASHTRIYA MANAV SANGRAHALAYA

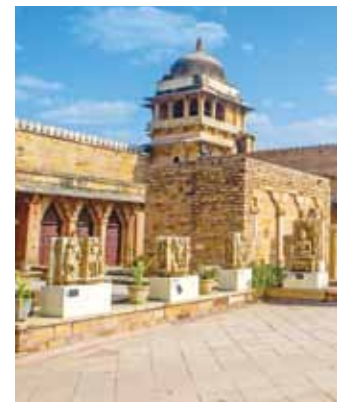
Any exploration of a museum is incomplete without a visit to the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, in Bhopal. On a sprawling land of over 200 acres, one can see the open-air exhibition of tribal habitats from all corners of India. These dwells are made by the tribes themselves using the indigenous raw material that depict the lifestyle of tribal in the villages. The open-air exhibitions include Himalayan Village, Medicinal Trail, Mythological Trails, Desert Village and Rock-Art Heritage that displays 36 rock shelters

with stunning prehistoric paintings. The museum also exhibits a collection of traditional outfits, agricultural and household objects and other crafts showcasing the regime of the tribes!

## MAHARAJA CHHATRASAL MUSEUM, DHUBELA

Situated at a distance of 62 km from Khajuraho, Maharaja Chhatrasal Museum is located in Dhubela on the Chhatarpur-Nowgaon highway in Chhatarpur district of MP. Popularly known as Dhubela Museum, the palace was built by Maharaja Chhatrasal on the banks of Dhubela Lake. Established in 1955, the museum helps tourist to know the history of famous Bundela dynasty of Khajuraho. This museum has eight galleries, of which two galleries display inscriptions, copper plates, Sati pillars, lingas and inscribed images of the Gupta and Kalachuri period. The museum houses a wide range of sculptures of the Shakti cult. It has also a significant collection of Jaina images.

art and artifacts. The museum offers the visitors a peek into the history of customs and rituals of different tribes in Madhya Pradesh. It houses over 500 tribal antiques, folk paintings, jewellery, masks, terracotta objects, metal craft and bamboo items.



## GUJARI MAHAL ARCHEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, GWALIOR

Gujari Mahal is one of the most visited places in Gwalior. The palace was built by king Man Singh for his beloved queen Mrignayani who was born in Gurjar family. It is now known as the Archeological Survey of India's museum in Gwalior. The archaeological heritage displayed in the museum is comprised of stone sculptures, terracotta figures, stone inscriptions, copper plate inscriptions, coins, bronze sculptures, paintings, arms and weapons and excavated material.

## ADIVART TRIBAL AND FOLK ART MUSEUM, KHAJURAH

Situated within the Chandela Cultural Complex in Khajuraho, this museum is an ideal place for history lovers, as it possesses a rich collection of tribal and folk







# India shines at WTM 2022

At recently concluded WTM 2022, MOT officials showcased varied tourism offerings of India to global industry stakeholders and talked about various initiatives such as sustainable tourism, digitalization and development of MSMEs.

## MT Bureau

**M**inistry of Tourism, Government of India, put up its best foot forward at World Travel Market (WTM) 2022, held from 7-9 November in London. This year's theme of WTM was 'The Future of Travel Starts Now'. With over 20 participants, the Indian Pavilion was inaugurated by Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, and Vikram Doraiswami, High Commissioner of India to UK, in the presence of Tourism Ministers of Kerala, Odisha, Karnataka,

Maharashtra, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu. A number of cultural performances, yoga sessions, heena and Bollywood dance performance happened at the pavilion.

### SESSIONS GALORE

Singh attended the session on 'Growing Consumer Demand for Responsible Tourism' held at Future Stage and 'Preparing for the next crisis: Reaching for long term sustainability', which was held at Sustainability Stage, WTM venue. He also attended Ministers' Summit at WTM, in association with UNWTO

and WTTC - Rethinking Tourism, as well as WTTC's Annual Reception. Singh participated in International Tourism & Investment Conference (ITIC) Panel on Strengthening Cooperation within Commonwealth to boost trade and investment in the travel and tourism sector.

**Rakesh Kumar Verma**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, was also present at the event. Both Singh and Verma held discussions with officials of ABTA to promote tourism between two countries. Verma also held meetings with travel trade stakeholders and media and

informed about the measures taken by Ministry of Tourism to promote tourism post pandemic.

### INDIA EVENING

There was an India Evening organised at Copper Chimney, West Field Mall, as part of WTM participation, which saw in attendance members of travel trade from India and UK and Indian diaspora. There were also many tourism ministers and secretaries of various state governments. It offered a platform for interaction and discussion to promote India as a multi-product and round-the-year destination with



sustainability. Singh delivered the welcome remarks and said that the priorities and objective of Ministry of Tourism is to showcase the diverse tourism products and services, including medical value travel and wellness, luxury trains and the gamut of tourism products to the international business community.

**SUSTAINABILITY AND G20 IN FOCUS**

Verma, while addressing the media, said that the Indian delegation is showcasing the varied tourism offerings of India to the global tourism industry stakeholders such as tour operators, travel agents and media at WTM 2022. “India is focusing on promoting sustainable tourism, digitalization of tourism sector, development of tourism MSMEs and skills. Tourism sector was hugely impacted

due to COVID. However, tourism is one sector which has great resilience, and it has bounced back from various adversities and crisis. In India, tourism is recovering well with domestic tourism contributing significantly. Under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has achieved unprecedented success in vaccinating our people. Approx. 2.19 billion doses have been administered showing that India as a tourist destination is safer and more resilient to tackle the threat posed by the current pandemic,” he explained.

He added that India is also gearing up for the G20 Presidency. “Under its Presidency, the country is expected to host over 200 meetings across 55 cities in the country.”

**PATA MEETING**

Singh, alongside Verma, had a meeting with Liz Ortiguera,

CEO, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), to discuss in depth engagement between PATA and India, including possibility to hold next annual summit in India, PATA travel mart and participation in other G20 side events. The Indian delegation also met Andy Burwell, International Director, Confederation of Business

Industry (CBI) and discussed the possibility of business/ investment opportunities and how India is an attractive investment destination. Apart from that, they met Kevin McCole, Managing Director, UK India Business Council (UKIBC), to invite their participation in the forthcoming Tourism Investor Summit.



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# IFTM Top Resa registers comeback

IFTM Top Resa 2022 witnessed high numbers of visitors and exhibitors from all around world to network and do business through meetings.

IFTM Top Resa, France's major event for tourism professionals ended on a high note with professionals from across the travel industry interacting and collaborating for full three days.

The event which was held after two difficult years for the industry post-pandemic witnessed high numbers of visitors and exhibitors returning from all around the world to get together and do business through meetings and contracts signed during the show.

## HIGH FOOTFALL

This year, 29,475 professionals visited about 1,200 brands and 170 destinations that were present at the show. These figures are close to 2019 attendance levels, bringing the trade show back to pre-COVID era faster than expected.



The next show is scheduled for 03-05 Oct, 2023

Lots of exhibitors also returned for the 2022 show. Numbers were up 41 per cent from 2021, marking another gradual return to 2019 levels.

After two challenging years for the industry, which demonstrated courage, perseverance and inventiveness, these results are extremely encouraging for IFTM Top Resa and the entire industry.

## STAKEHOLDERS RECONNECT

The trade show was inaugurated by Laurence Gaborieau, Director

of IFTM Top Resa, in the presence of Olivia Grégoire, Minister for SMEs, Trade, Crafts and Tourism, 14 Ministers and 26 Ambassadors. They strolled for nearly three hours to meet exhibitors, visitors, and the press for constructive discussions on current industry issues. Visitors and exhibitors were also able to reconnect with the trade show's annual key events which have contributed to its reputation: the Start-Up Contest, the Hackathon by CDS Groupe, the Travel Agents Cup and the Travel Agents Cup Junior.

This year, IFTM Top Resa was particularly keen to put travel agents back at the heart of the show with the transformation of the Network Village into the Agency Village, the return of the AGV Lounge by MSC Cruises and buyer programmes to facilitate their visit.





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# M!CE biz eyes revenue jump in Q4

Putting pandemic behind it, M!CE industry eyes handsome recovery and regrowth in Q4 with corporates bringing back off-site events and meetings on their strategy boards.

**Lipla Negi**

As corporate movement and business travel regains momentum, the M!CE sector sees a rise in demand reaching to 2019 levels. While domestic tourism helped the tourism industry stay afloat post-pandemic, M!CE business has been the last one to finish on the road to recovery. Beaming optimism, 2022, however, brought some much desired hope in terms of M!CE movement so far. Riding strong on domestic demand, Q4 is expected to bring a decent jump in M!CE revenue as per industry experts. Not only are the big M!CE shows back, corporates have also realised the irreplaceable significance of physical meetings and events.

From here, it is going to be an upward and onward journey, believes **JB Singh**, President and CEO, InterGlobe Hotels, who adds, "M!CE is on a rebound and with almost every sector resuming work from office, last few months have showcased healthy recovery from this segment and we expect this improvement going forward." The festive season proved to be a big boost for the sector, bringing corporate movement and optimism back in the system. "The ongoing travel patterns and trends have had a positive impact on the hospitality industry," he underlines.

## DOMESTIC BUSINESS DRIVES M!CE GROWTH

After a 'sold out' festive season, the hotels are also optimistic



**JB SINGH**  
President and CEO,  
InterGlobe Hotels

**WITH ALMOST EVERY SECTOR RESUMING WORK FROM OFFICE, LAST FEW MONTHS HAVE SHOWCASED HEALTHY RECOVERY**

about a handsome rise in M!CE revenue in Q4. Closely watching the hike in business travel, **Puneet Dhawan**, SVP operations, Accor, says, "We have seen an escalation in demand for M!CE in Q4 already. All in-person corporate events—team building, strategic planning, R&R off-sites among others—were on halt for the past two years and are seeing revival steadily. We are experiencing movement in a few industries such as the pharma sector, automobile industry,



**PUNEET DHAWAN**  
SVP operations,  
Accor

**WE HAVE SEEN AN ESCALATION IN DEMAND FOR M!CE IN Q4 ALREADY**

manufacturing sector, IT/ITES segment and can expect them to drive demand for M!CE this year and in the coming year." Crediting domestic businesses for this growth, he further adds, "We believe domestic businesses will drive M!CE revenues to begin with, and large-scale international M!CE events will slowly but surely follow." In order to encourage this momentum, several hotels are offering an array of customized packages with flexible booking and cancellation policies to cater to the shift.

With airlines returning to their full potential in terms of routes and frequency, the ease of



**ABINASH MANGHANI**  
CEO,  
WelcomHeritage Hotels

**INDIAN ECONOMY IS DRIVEN BY INDIAN COMPANIES, WHICH ARE GROWING AT A RAPID PACE DUE TO THE 'MAKE IN INDIA' INITIATIVE**

travel is going to have a big positive impact on domestic corporate sector and subsequently on the M!CE business. Agrees **Abinash Manghani**, CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels, "Indian economy is driven by Indian companies, which are growing at a rapid pace due to the 'Make in India' initiative by the government and sustainable growth in demand in the domestic market. Once the airfare stabilises, these businesses will boost corporate travel from the Indian/MSME sector."





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# Marriott continues to scale up operations

Exuding delight at recent domestic boom in Indian hospitality sector, **Arun Kumar**, Market Vice President, North India, Nepal and Bhutan, Marriott avers that some Marriott hotels in cities have witnessed occupancy between 90 and 95%.

**Nisha Verma**

**W**ith Bhutan opening its borders for tourists recently, Marriott is making sure that Indian tourists put the destination and their two properties in the country into their next holiday itinerary. “We have two beautiful hotels. Le Meridien Paro is closer to the airport, resort kind of location and close to nature. Then we have Le Meridien Thimphu, which has a city centre location. Both have been successful hotels in the past and unlike many other operators, we did not close the hotels. We continued to run the hotels and worked with the owners to make sure the business is moving along,” he shared.

He explained, “As the country opens, we are expecting tourism to pick up in Bhutan. Despite being small, Bhutan is managing tourists in a structured manner. India is still a big market for Bhutan and with



**ARUN KUMAR**  
Market Vice President,  
North India, Nepal and Bhutan,  
Marriott

**WE ARE ACTIVELY WORKING WITH THE G20 ORGANISING COMMITTEE BECAUSE WE HAVE OVER 100 HOTELS IN INDIA, AND WE WANT BUSINESS AT THE END OF THE DAY**

the market opening, we are expecting tourists from traditional source markets like India, Singapore and Thailand. We want to help the tourism of Bhutan to recover what it has lost in the last two-and-a-half years.”

## INDIA BOOM

Talking about the big domestic boom seen in India, Kumar said, “It is fantastic to get business back into the hotels. We have some city hotels with occupancy between 90-95 per cent which is encouraging.”

## MANAGING ARRs

The increasing ARR in last one year has been the talk of the town. “This boom of business and this average rate growth has helped us to get our profitability back in place, which has helped us to spend and reopen all the facilities, areas much quicker than we thought, and we are going to add more services

into these destinations,” he claimed.

Kumar claimed that they are seeing growth in secondary and tertiary cities more than the metros. He revealed, “This in South Asia, and specifically India, we have seven projects that will open. In our market, we have two new openings—Westin in Rishikesh by end of November and a Le Meridien in Amritsar to open by mid-December.”

## MICE AND G20

Talking about working with the government on G20 Presidency of India, Kumar pointed out, “We are actively working with the G20 organising committee because we have over 100 hotels in India, and we want business at the end of the day. This is the first time that the government has taken so much interest in developing some of these. We need more international conferences to come into India.”



# Lords Group announces new hotels in Rajkot, Noida



Strengthening its portfolio in tier I and II markets, Lords Hotels & Resorts offers luxuriously designed hotels in Rajkot and Noida.

In a major expansion spree, Lord Group has announced two new hotels at Rajkot and Noida. The hotel at Rajkot, Lords Inn is a pure vegetarian hotel, and it is the third property of the Group in the city whereas the Noida property, Lords Inn is a luxuriously designed hotel that offers 65 rooms and a spacious banquet venue—ideal space for corporate as well as for private gatherings that can accommodate a capacity of 300 people. The hotel also has a rooftop lounge for 200 people and a signature restaurant, Blue Coriander Restaurant which offers a mix of global and local cuisine.

Lords Inn, Rajkot is a three-star property and encompasses 32 contemporarily styled rooms maintained with high-end amenities including Wi-Fi and ideal necessities for a modern day stay.

“With unprecedented growth and high-velocity expansion plans, we are well positioned to further



**VIKAS SURI**  
VICE PRESIDENT, OPERATIONS  
& DEVELOPMENT, LORDS INN,  
RAJKOT

**THE SUCCESS OF  
THE OTHER TWO  
HOTELS IN RAJKOT  
HAS PROVIDED  
LORDS THE MUCH-  
NEEDED IMPETUS  
TO CONSOLIDATE  
AND EXPAND ITS  
PORTFOLIO**

expand our existing portfolio in the coming months. We thank our new partners for their trust in us as we seek to affiliate with more such owners to offer Lord’s exhilarating hospitality to business and leisure travelers,” said Pushpendra Bansal, COO, Lords Hotels & Resorts.

Echoing similar sentiments, Vikas Suri, Vice President, Operations & Development, Lords Inn, Rajkot, said, “The success of the other two hotels in Rajkot has provided Lords the much-needed impetus to consolidate and expand its portfolio. This is in line with the company’s strategy to develop and consolidate strong brand presence in all its key source markets. This launch demonstrates our vision and confidence in the buoyancy of the hospitality market in India.”

Speaking at the launch of Lords Inn, Noida, Suri, said, “It will be an ideal destination for both business and leisure travelers. To maximize further growth and expansion

opportunities, we are delighted to consolidate our presence in Noida with this first hotel. The hotel will provide quality accommodation and services at the best rates. We hope to ensure a pleasant stay for all our guests traveling to this region.”

Dharmesh Jiwani, Owner, Lords Inn, Rajkot, said, “We are delighted and excited with this new property and look forward to showcasing a flavour of what the magnificent city of Rajkot and our hotel can offer.”

The Lords Hotels & Resorts presently owns and manages 57 hotels in 13 states in two countries including Nepal. Its presence is in various cities across India covering business, leisure, and religious destinations across India, and operates under brands such as Plaza, Inn, and Eco Inn & Resorts to suit the needs of wide and varied guests. The chain has an aggressive expansion plan with five more properties in different parts of the country being planned to be brought under its folds in the next six months.

# Backwaters and Bay of Bengal: Treat for travelers

Radisson Resort Pondicherry Bay mesmerizes travelers with picturesque backwaters and pristine Bay of Bengal accentuated by Franco-Tamil architecture.

**T**he Radisson Resort Pondicherry Bay is a perfect destination for travelers who want a serene getaway. The resort offers a scenic view of backwaters and the Bay of Bengal.

Ameet Raj Kundu, Cluster Commercial Head, Radisson Resorts, said, “A beautiful scenery will give you an excellent experience of the backwaters on both sides. The waves, dunes and fishing boats on the sides with coconut plantations around looking like farmland adds an authentic tropical experience to your stay at Radisson Resort Pondicherry Bay.”

The Radisson Resort Pondicherry Bay features 46 chalets and five private

villas for guests to choose from. Boasting Franco-Tamil architecture, the rooms represent the classic style of Puducherry, with wide balconies and verandas decorated in rich, earthy colors. There are four chalet types, providing guests with the option of a balcony or veranda, as well as the choice of luxury villas with private pools and are right by the side of the lagoon.

It is adorned by the Ariyankuppam Lagoon on one side and the Eden Beach on the other, all of which are to be cozily enjoyed from wide-ranging selection of French-style rooms. The newly built property is a beachfront resort to the Eden Beach. Eden Beach is an ideal

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**BOASTING FRANCO-TAMIL ARCHITECTURE, THE ROOMS REPRESENT THE CLASSIC STYLE OF PUDUCHERRY, WITH WIDE BALCONIES AND VERANDAS DECORATED IN RICH, EARTHY COLORS**

---

place to find peace and quiet whereas also taking in the waves and a dazzling sunset along the horizon. One of the most distinguishable voluntary awards in the world for marinas, beaches, and sustainable boating tourism insurers is the Blue Flag awarded to Eden Beach.

The Beach is less familiar among most tourists, but it never fails to amaze. It is nestled between the Arts and Crafts Village and Paradise Beach, a coconut tree plantation in the pattern of Kerala, sit-out umbrella huts, a watchtower, an amphitheatre, scuba diving, a children’s play area, fitness equipment, and backwaters are all to be enjoyed at this beach.





# Back with bang

Global Panorama Showcase 2022, which was held in Ahmedabad and Kochi, recently saw great attendance of stakeholders from travel industry networking under one roof after long time.



# Toast to Christmas feast

Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla recently hosted traditional Cake Mixing ceremony and launched various events to usher in Christmas festivities.





# MOVEMENTS



**Alam Khan**  
Vice President Sales  
The Clarks Hotels and  
Resorts

Alam Khan started his career with Sarovar Hotels in 2000, after which, he worked with reputed hospitality names across different departments in leadership roles. In his last position, he worked as the Director, Revenue and Distribution, Sarovar Hotels and Resorts, managing 100 hotels. As Vice President Sales for The Clarks Hotels and Resorts, he will be responsible for working in sync with organizational goals, achieving targets, training of employees, and implementing quality initiatives. He is known in the industry for strong contracting and negotiation skills.



**Sanjoy Bhattacharyya**  
Vice President, Finance  
Atmosphere Hotels &  
Resorts

Sanjoy Bhattacharyya is a certified Chartered Accountant and completed B. Com (Hons) from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. He is a seasoned accounting and finance professional with over 25 years of experience in driving strategic financial operations, budgeting, statutory compliance, risk management, funds raising, and financial restructuring. Before joining Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts as Vice President Finance, he has held senior positions at Oberoi Hotels and Resorts, The Imperial, New Delhi, Zuri Hotels and Resorts and Bloom Hotel Group, New Delhi.



**Sally Hein**  
Director, Sales  
Gold Coast Convention  
and Exhibition Centre

Sally Hein will be responsible for the team driving domestic and international sales activities and will lead Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre's sales strategy as Director of Sales for 2023 and beyond. Hein brings extensive experience of the tourism and business events industries and has an impressive track record. Business events have always been Hein's passion and she will be involved with conferences. Hein will be reporting directly to General Manager, Adrienne Readings.



**Saahil Sheokand**  
Director, Sales and Marketing  
Radisson Gurugram  
Udyog Vihar

Saahil Sheokand has been associated with some of the leading properties such as Hyatt Regency Delhi, Hyatt Regency Gurgaon, Hyatt Place Gurgaon, Dusit Hotels & Resorts and Corus Hotel Hyde Park, London and brings with him a wealth of experience in the hospitality arena. In each of his previous roles, he contributed immensely towards creating milestone achievements for respective organizations. Prior to joining Radisson Gurugram Udyog Vihar as Director of Sales and Marketing, he was associated with Hyatt Regency Gurgaon as Director of Sales.



**Rashi Sharma**  
Cluster Marketing and  
Communication Manager, Sheraton  
Grand Pune and Le Méridien  
Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa

Backed with MBA from SIMC, Pune and BBA from NMIMS, Rashi Sharma will spearhead the marketing activities for both the properties, Sheraton Grand Pune and Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa as Cluster Marketing and Communication Manager. Prior to this, she was spearheading the PR mandate at Taj Santacruz, Mumbai for three years. During her tenure in the PR industry, she has worked with agencies such as Edelman India, Fleishman Hillard, Kimberly-Clark, Jaguar Land Rover and United Nations. Sharma is a hotelier by profession and a traveller at heart.



**Sumita C Majumdar**  
Head, Human Resources  
and Learning &  
Development,  
Fortune Hotels

Sumita C Majumdar brings with her a wealth of 30 years' experience in Human Resource. She has an in-depth understanding in the areas of HR Tech, Talent Management, Organization Development, Talent Development, Employee Engagement, Recruitment and Administrative Functions. As Head, Human Resources and Learning & Development, Fortune Hotels, she will be responsible for managing the extensive human resource portfolio of the hotel chain and focussing on talent management, compensation, employee benefits and wellbeing, training and development, compliances as well as workplace safety.



**Amit K Singh**  
General Manager  
Hotel Golden Tulip Lucknow

Amit K Singh is a seasoned hospitality professional with a strong background that boasts of an illustrious and ascending career graph with a rich experience of working with good hospitality brands. In the past, he has worked with hospitality brands such as Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, Park Plaza & Radisson Hotels. Before joining Golden Tulip Lucknow as General Manager, he was with Sarovar Hotels New Delhi as Cluster General Manager for The Muse Sarovar Portico New Delhi- Nehru Place and Kapashera.



**Gurdarsan Pal S**  
General Manager, Contracts  
and Procurement  
7 Apple Hotels & Resorts

Gurdarsan Pal S has more than twenty years of experience in the hospitality industry. In his extensive career span, he has worked with different brands such as MARS group, ITC Fortune, Ramada, Sarovar and Fern. As General Manager, Contracts and Procurement of 7 Apple Hotels & Resorts, he will oversee procurement operations, strategic planning, contract, purchases, billing management, cost management, quantity surveying, project management, vendor/contractor management, contractor on boarding due diligence.



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