RESPONSIBLE HOSPITALITY
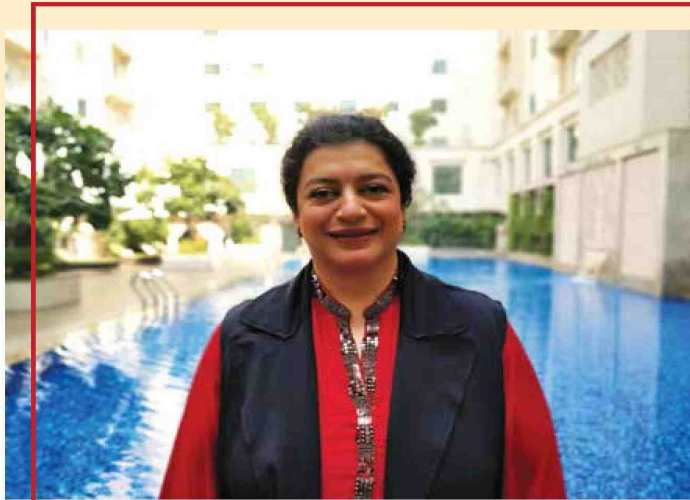
Lemon Tree aims to achieve plastic neutrality and zero waste in the coming years

Sustainability is a business approach that creates long term stakeholder value by managing risk and embracing opportunities through optimization of the economic, environmental and social bottom lines, also known as the Triple Bottom Line: Aradhana Lal

Today, sustainability is globally viewed through the lens of a company's environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) performance - the three pillars that measure how sustainable and positive are the impact of a company's operations on all stakeholders including society at large.

In fact the old view that a company's primary objective is to only reward shareholders is becoming obsolete – what the world is interested to know today is how responsibly a company behaves with all its stakeholders. "Increasingly even

investors and customers are now using ESG as a screening process for potential investments and for use of the brand/company, respectively", said Aradhana Lal, Vice President (Brand, Communications and Sustainability Initiatives), Lemon Tree Hotels in a conversation with HAI ENGAGE.

"Over the last few years, Lemon Tree Hotels has strengthened its work in all these areas and observed a positive impact on its stakeholders. During this unprecedented pandemic year, it has become even more evident to us that to sustain our business over time, embedding ESG principles in our business model is a critical requirement. We have developed and implemented a number of good governance practices i.e. board oversight of key areas including risk, nomination and remuneration, CSR, audit, succession planning to name a few", Lal says.

Lemon Tree has been moving towards renewable energy over the last few years including solar, wind and hydel power. Today renewable energy accounts for approximately 10% of total energy consumed; the hotel chain has set a goal to double it in the near future. By replacing traditional energy with renewable energy and by conserving energy, the group has also been able to reduce its carbon footprint and continues to constantly find ways to reduce GHG emissions."

Another fundamental environmental practice at Lemon Tree is water conservation, recycling and reuse. Lal says, "the goal is to get to Zero Discharge as soon as we can". Lemon Tree has also recently re-defined is waste management policy and a pilot is underway. "We want to achieve plastic neutrality and zero waste in the coming years," added Lal.

Social inclusion is also one of the mainstays at Lemon Tree. The company has trained its efforts on creating a socially inclusive work environment which seeks to employ people of different backgrounds, abilities and ethnicities and offer them work as a unified team with a common goal. Lal says, "we believe that people who are opportunity deprived due to physical, social or economic disabilities must be provided the same environment as others to realize their full potential. Such individuals should be presented with the opportunity to live their lives with dignity."

During the pandemic, Lemon Tree undertook a slew of initiatives to ensure the health and safety of guests and employees including partnering with state governments to convert 21 hotels into quarantine centres for Indians returning from outside the country.

"We have partnered with leading hospitals, where we have offered our properties across India to provide early care to mild/asymptomatic Covid patients. We partnered with Diversey to roll out a hygiene and sanitization program called Rest Assured. We are also providing free packed meals to people in some cities and have till date provided over 100 meals", Lal says.