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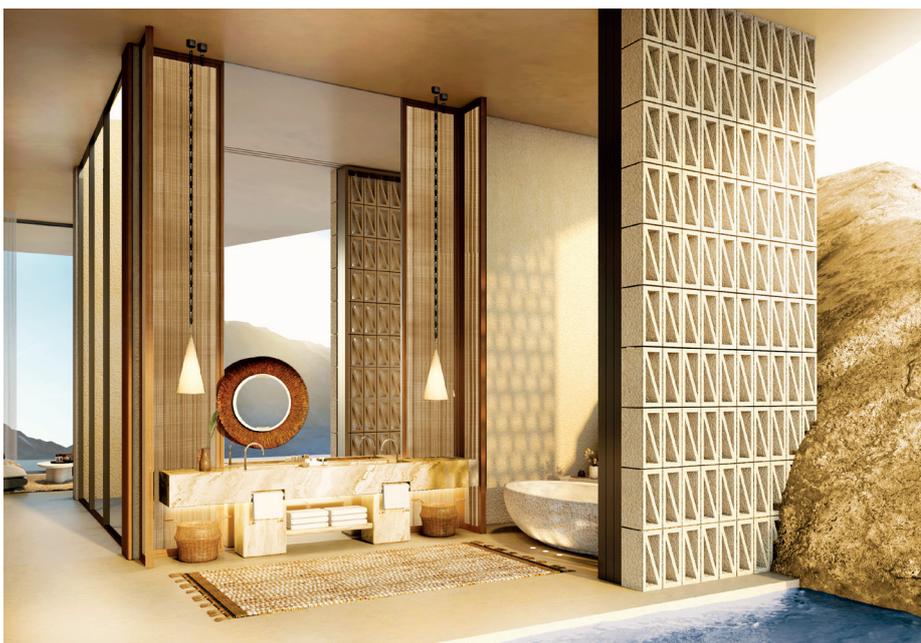


Guests will enter the Desert Rock resort through a hidden valley nestled between the mountains.



Wonderlands of the Red Sea

Some 50 resorts that offer memorable experiences are expected to come up at The Red Sea Project in Saudi Arabia. A look at two key concepts that have been unveiled for this unique destination.



The 60-key Desert Rock will be built into the stunning Saudi mountain landscape.

THE Red Sea Project, the world's most ambitious regenerative tourism project, is setting the stage for unique experiences for visitors looking to explore its pristine islands, sweeping sand dunes and mountain canyons in the remote virgin terrain of northwestern Saudi Arabia. In line with this ambition, the destination is expected to comprise 50 resorts, offering up to 8,000 hotel rooms alongside a host of leisure facilities when it is fully completed in 2030.

Among such unique experiences, the project's developer The Red Sea Development Company (TRSDC) last month unveiled designs for its spectacular Desert Rock mountain resort, which will integrate architecture with nature as it will be built into the stunning Saudi mountain landscape. This follows the earlier launch of the Coral Bloom resort project on Shurayrah island in the Red Sea.

Created by the world-class architectural design firm Oppenheim Architecture, Desert Rock is designed to protect and preserve the environment and built into the beautiful wadi vistas in the west of the country, allowing guests to connect with the nature and local culture of the region.

Site preparation works have commenced,

and construction on the project began in July this year.

“We wanted to create a destination that allows guests to experience Saudi Arabia’s untouched beauty. Desert Rock will provide guests with uninterrupted spectacular views while preserving the natural landscape for future generations to enjoy,” says John Pagano, CEO at TRSDC.

“We have drawn inspiration from the surrounding environment, while providing unparalleled luxury, allowing guests to connect with nature and create memorable experiences,” he adds.

Guests will enter the resort through a hidden valley nestled between the mountains. From there, they will find 48 villas and 12 hotel rooms within the mountain – a total of 60 keys – located amongst the vista, with architecture fully integrated into the rock to preserve its striking silhouette, a tribute to Oppenheim Architecture’s philosophy to build with the land, not on the land.

A range of accommodation units will be available, from ground-level dwellings to crevice hotel suites midway up the mountain, and a select number of excavated rooms within the rock massif itself.

To provide undisturbed views across the landscape, most roads leading into the resort will be pushed to the edge of the main wadi and hidden behind landscape mounds. This will also minimise sound and light pollution, allowing guests to fully absorb the dramatic desert landscape.

The resort will feature state-of-the-art facilities, including a world-class spa and fitness centre, remote destination din-

HOTEL MANAGEMENT DEALS SIGNED

THE RED Sea Development Company (TRSDC) announced late last month that it has signed nine hotel management agreements with international hotel brands to operate more than 1,700 of the 3,000 hotel rooms that are planned be ready under Phase One.

The brands that are set to operate nine of the 16 properties currently under development in the first phase include: Edition Hotels and St Regis Hotels & Resorts, part of Marriott International; Fairmont Hotel & Resorts, Raffles Hotels & Resorts and SLS Hotels & Residences, part of global hospitality group Accor; Grand Hyatt, part of Hyatt Hotels Corporation; InterContinental Hotels & Resorts and Six Senses, part of IHG Hotels & Resorts; and Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, a global luxury hospitality company.

“We are proud to unveil our collection of



The St Regis hotel to come up at the project.

unique and diverse hospitality brands that cater to this growing market and underpin our commitment to creating a world-leading barefoot luxury destination which will soon serve as a gateway to one of the last undiscovered places on the planet,” says John Pagano, CEO at TRSDC.

“Most importantly, such partnerships with globally recognised and respected brands signifies the growing confidence in our business, our flagship destination and in Saudi Arabia as a tourism destination.” he adds.

ing areas as well as a feature lagoon oasis. Guests will be able to hike, use dune buggies, and star gaze as part of the site-wide activities programme.

Commenting on the status of work on the project, Ian Williamson, Chief Project Delivery Officer at TRSDC, tells *Gulf Construction*: “Enabling works commenced in July this year and remain on track for this resort to complete as part of Phase One development.”

SUSTAINABLY CONSTRUCTED

As part of TRSDC’s commitment to regenerative tourism, Desert Rock will be designed to achieve the highest Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification level.

“TRSDC and our partners are investigating in the most innovative and sustainable approaches to delivering this ground-breaking resort, which is elevated



Coral Bloom hotels are designed to give the impression that they have washed up on the beaches.



Coral Bloom will comprise 11 hotels on Shurayrah island.

175-m-plus above sea level with dramatic topography, and villa elevations vary from 180-m-plus to 280-m-plus above sea level,” says Williamson.

“This includes elements such as power and water supply, drainage networks and the wider delivery of our regenerative approach to development. The resort will be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy, as will the wider destination, with no connection to the national grid,” he adds.

The architecture has been designed to reduce energy consumption and regenerate native flora. Water retention and distribution systems will be used throughout the site, with harvested rainwater used to create a more green, flourishing wadi.

Alongside this, materials excavated from the site will be used to create the infrastructure. Stone will be used for interior and exterior walls and floors, while ground stone and existing sand will be used for concrete aggregate – which is the main building material for all the architecture.

Chad Oppenheim, Founder of Oppenheim Architecture, says: “Desert Rock is one of the most dramatic desert landscapes in the world, which is why we wanted to use the architecture as a way to honour and respect it. By utilising natural materials and integrating the resort into the rock, guests can connect physically with the destination and experience Saudi Arabia’s stunning, natural beauty.”

The project also aims to maintain the ancient history of the site by hiring members of the local community to act

as stewards of the land and provide educational tours for visitors about the local history of the area.

CORAL BLOOM

Designed to protect, blend with and enhance the pristine natural environment at The Red Sea Project’s main hub island Shurayrah, Coral Bloom has been created by architectural firm Foster + Partners which was appointed to design 11 hotels on island.

The plan is designed to avoid disruption of the Shurayrah’s mangroves and other habitats, while providing natural defences from erosion, and creating new habitats through landscaping to enhance the island’s natural state. It will see new beaches created on the dolphin-shaped island along with a new lagoon. These enhancements will contribute to raising the level of the land, providing a defensive layer from the global threat of rising sea levels.

Shurayrah is one of 92 islands in the project’s archipelago, which is home to the world’s fourth largest barrier reef system, untouched corals and a significant number of endangered species, according to TRSDC.

The island’s natural landscape will be used to dramatic effect with all hotels and villas nestled within the landscape. The absence of high-rise buildings will ensure the spectacular vistas remain uninhibited, while creating a sense of mystery for guests as the island slowly reveals itself, it adds.

The hotel designs have also been responsive to the changing world and traveller

demands over the past two years. There will be no internal corridors for example, in response to a growing demand for space and seclusion following the coronavirus pandemic. The resorts themselves will be created using lightweight materials with a low thermal mass and manufactured off-site, meaning more energy-efficient construction and less impact on the environment, according to TRSDC.

Gerard Evenden, Head of Studio at Foster + Partners, says: “Our vision for Shurayrah is inspired by the island’s natural state, with the hotels designed to give the impression that they have washed up on the beaches and nestled among the dunes almost like driftwood.

“The materials we use and the low impact they have ensures that the pristine environment is protected, while the additions we make to the island serve to enhance what is already there – hence the name, Coral Bloom.”

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Red Sea Project has already passed significant milestones on the destination and work is on track to welcome the first guests by the end of 2022, when the first hotels will open. Phase One, which includes 16 hotels in total, will complete by the end of 2023.

Activity on the first phase of development is well under way with over 600 contracts signed to date, worth over SR17 billion (\$4.5 billion). A 100-hectare landscape nursery, which will provide more than 15 million plants for the destination, is now fully operational. There are more than 8,000 workers currently on-site and 80 km of new roads are now complete, including the new airport road, to better connect the destination. The Construction Village, set to house 10,000 workers, is now open and development is progressing well at the Coastal Village, which will be home to around 14,000 people who will eventually work at the destination.

Upon completion in 2030, the destination will comprise 50 resorts and more than 1,000 residential properties across 22 islands and six inland sites. The destination will also include luxury marinas, golf courses, entertainment, leisure facilities and an international airport. The project is being developed over 28,000 km of pristine lands and waters along Saudi Arabia’s west coast. ■



Hilton Garden Inn ... adjacent to The Avenues mall in Bahrain.

An encore for Havelock with Hilton Garden Inn

AN UPSCALE yet affordable business and leisure hotel opened its doors recently in Bahrain echoing the deep blue hues of the adjacent sea as well as the rich earthy tones of the vast open desert in the country's hinterland that at once give guests a sense of place.

The 23-storey Hilton Garden Inn is ideally positioned overlooking Bahrain Bay with the vibrant shopping mall - The Avenues Bahrain - at its doorstep.

Fitting out this latest landmark destination was assigned to Havelock One Interiors, a leading turnkey fit-out contractor and manufacturer in the Middle East, which also holds credit for having successfully implemented interior work on the Hilton Garden Inn in Kuwait in 2019.

"Having completed the Hilton Garden Inn - Kuwait, we were very keen on the award of the fit-out packages for the property in Bahrain. The brand is young, vibrant and has a playful undercurrent,

which allows us to be innovative with the specified materials and design features," says Jihad Raad, Division Director, Hospitality Manufacturing and Fit-out Bahrain at Havelock One.

"Fortunately, our off-site mock-up rooms convinced all stakeholders, so we were recommended to manufacture the custom joinery, to carry out the finishing of the hotel's interiors, as well as to coordinate all MEP (mechanical, electrical and plumbing) works integration with the interiors," he adds.

The hotel tower comprises 192 rooms, including 35 suites, with a mix of family, twin and king rooms. Covering 269,098 sq ft, the hotel has other distinctively designed amenities such as an open all-day restaurant, flexible meeting spaces with state-of-the-art facilities, a fully equipped fitness centre, and an infinity pool overlooking Bahrain Bay.

Some 70 per cent of the guest rooms offer connecting rooms, and most of the suites offer a kitchenette.

According to dwp | design worldwide partnership, the designer of the project, the lobby's rustic, coastal decor was inspired by the surrounding Arabian Gulf and encompassing archipelago.

Overlooking the Bahrain Bay, the hotel offers breathtaking views from its public areas, complemented with soothing sea-inspired hues and colour palettes for the interiors. These are enhanced by the hotel lobby's unique lighting fixtures and open concept design.

The design of this luxury hotel is remi-



A guest room at Hilton Garden Inn ... millworks by Havelock One.



Havelock One's factory manufactured ceiling panels, reception counters, banquet seating, tables, countertops and doors.

niscent of the city's past, reflective of the present, and representative of its future as a growing, dynamic and cultural hub, it says.

The design vision of this hospitality project is to reflect the emergence of a unique urban hotel, anchored between a vibrant shopping mall and the bay leading out to the sea, according to dwp | design.

The first-floor lobby acts as the heart of the hotel, providing a space for "openness and encounter" where guests can socialise and unwind both indoors and out on the terrace. The second level centres around "meeting and socialising", comprising social areas ranging from boardrooms to restaurants.

"We truly deliver a unique and serene experience at the Hilton Garden Inn Bahrain Bay, providing our guests with the exceptional service the Hilton is known for. Besides the stunning views offered throughout the hotel, of either Bahrain Bay or the sea, the design of each and every room echoes a sense of relaxation and well-being. We have enjoyed unparalleled occupancy rates since opening, despite the ongoing situation which has affected the hotel industry across the world," comments Manuela Brode, General Manager at Hilton Garden Inn Bahrain Bay.

Havelock One's manufacturing and fit-out teams based in Askar and Sanabis, Bahrain completed the turnkey interior décor work of this four-star property.

Since Havelock One and its supply chain partners had been responsible for the mock-ups already, they were able to fast-track and deliver the project even with the Covid-19 pandemic overshadowing the execution period, according to Raad.

While the factory in Askar manufactured and supplied large ceiling panels, reception counters, banquet seating, tables, countertop, doors, sliding doors and complete

millworks for the guest rooms, the fit-out team carefully selected premium materials for the finishes, which included regular and acoustic gypsum cladding, corridor wall cladding, painting, wallcoverings, tiling, carpets, glass and massive operable partition works, he explains.

The carpets were procured from Brinton and Mohawk Group, while the foldable partitions were from Gibca. Other suppliers included Kavadrat and BSH (wallcovering) and Marazzi and Deltile (tiles).

Commenting on some of the highlights of the hotel, Raad says: "One of the eye-catching installations in the Hilton Garden Inn is the rickshaw (tuk-tuk) food truck located in the Together & Co Lobby Café. A Bajaj rickshaw was sourced by Havelock One and fully customised into a service station. This feature demanded our setting-out experts to develop a 3D digital design to fully understand and cater to the needs of the operator and to integrate the exact MEP requirements."

Together & Co, which features a tranquil minimalist design, is the all-day dining

spot located on the second lobby level.

The scope of the project also included additional decorative items, such as a custom beam ceiling installation in the all-day dining area and customised operable partitions with pass doors in the meeting rooms, adds Raad.

This fast-track project required a high-level of planning and coordination among all stakeholders, and hence the interior fit-out scope started along with the main construction works on-site, carried out by Nass Contracting, to ensure that the Hilton Garden Inn Bahrain Bay was ready for its launch in July, he concludes.

Since its inception in 1998, Havelock One has established itself as a leading turnkey fit-out service provider in the GCC, specialising in interior contracting and the manufacturing of bespoke joinery, metal works and elaborate shop-fittings. The company supports its sophisticated client base with high-end services and products for hospitality, F&B, retail, commercial, government, entertainment and residential projects. ■



The rickshaw (tuk-tuk) food truck located in the Together & Co Lobby Café.

Geberit aims for hygiene with style

The bed and bathroom can make or break a hotel experience. As bathrooms are half the battle for a hotelier, it pays to regularly invest in comfort and hygiene and in clever solutions – which Geberit has in spades, says SHARIB RAO, Specification Sales Manager – Gulf Region.

HOTELIERS go to great lengths to make their guests happy – and they know what holidaymakers and business travellers want. Both of these customer groups attach great importance to the hotel being furnished and equipped to a high quality standard, having a cosy ambience and providing peace and relaxation in a clean room.

Hoteliers can gain a decisive advantage over the competition from a hygiene perspective by having a modern equipped bathroom. This is because a timelessly attractive design, modern sanitary technology and an easy-to-clean and functional interior all enhance guests' well-being. When planned and implemented correctly, both the guest and the hotelier can benefit from a modern bathroom.

REVITALISATION THROUGH RENOVATION

Hotels have to keep pace with the times by regularly investing in the furniture and equipment. However, the word "renovation" is enough to set off alarm bells with many a hotelier as it must not lead to significant losses in revenue. Time is money, and the revenue per available room has to be kept as high as possible. Speed is, therefore, of paramount importance because construction noise, unoccupied rooms and dirt scare off guests.

On the flip side, even minor renovations can turn the bathroom into a paragon of hygiene and comfort and thus can help set the hotel apart from the competition. For example, the existing standard toilets can be replaced by Swiss sanitary solutions provided by Geberit's AquaClean shower toilets – a solution that improves hygiene and creates added value for the customer.

If the bathrooms are still equipped with exposed cisterns, these can be replaced by



Hotel bathrooms should have a timeless design and modern sanitary technology.

the Geberit Monolith sanitary modules which provide many advantages. In addition to concealing unsightly cables and pipes, several Geberit Monolith models also feature odour extraction, ambient lighting and other additional functions. What's more – and crucially in the case of a hotel – they can also be installed in just a few hours and the existing connections can continue to be used.

SOUND INSULATION

Although hotel rooms should be a haven of peace and quiet, guests may be disturbed by noises from nearby trams, footsteps from neighbouring rooms and doors that close loudly. Hoteliers tackle such sources of noise by implementing sound insulation measures, such as laying carpets that insulate well against impact sound. However, they should be equally diligent in combating the sound of flushing toilets and water draining from the shower in adjacent

rooms. As many hotel guests are all too aware, this is not something that is always solved optimally.

The foundations for noise minimisation can be laid as early as the renovation's planning phase. Sometimes, it is the little things that reduce noise and therefore help improve the guests' experience. For example, Geberit sound insulation mats can be installed between the toilet and the wall to prevent vibrations from being transmitted to the wall. Supply systems can be installed in line with sound insulation requirements by using fastenings that are insulated against structure-borne sound.



An elegant, thorough and not particularly time-consuming way to redesign bathrooms while ensuring that everything works in a sound-optimised fashion is to use prewall installations. These consist of support systems and installation elements that are acoustically decoupled from the wall (for example, Geberit GIS or Geberit Duofix) as well as building drainage systems (for example, Geberit Silent-PP or Geberit Silent-db20). In this way, a single system and its perfectly coordinated elements ensure that the future hotel rooms are quiet.

GOOD DESIGN

Bathroom design is a key aspect in hotels; this is not just about having a stylishly furnished and designed bathroom, but more about it having a functional one. A lack of functional added value – such as easy cleaning, for example – takes the shine off the bathroom. Additional useful functions, such as odour extraction with Geberit DuoFresh, round off the good design of the products.

The new Geberit Olona shower surface is ideal for floor-even showers. The surface design covered in Gelcoat gives the matt white shower surface a visible and tangibly elegant look and is easy to clean. The drain cover in the same colour is aesthetically enhanced by a slim-line chrome ring. Thanks to its Class B antislip properties, the shower surface offers secure footing. With the Olona shower surface you have a functional design that also meets hygiene requirements.

So, with the right approach, it is not too difficult for hoteliers to please guests while also benefiting themselves. ■

First Warner Bros Hotel to open this month

THE world's first Warner Bros hotel is set to open on Yas Island in Abu Dhabi, UAE, this month (November 11).

The new WB Abu Dhabi hotel is a collaborative venture between Miral, Abu Dhabi's leading curator of magnetic experiences and Warner Bros, home to one of the most well-known and successful collections of brands and characters in the world, and will be operated by Hilton under the Curio Collection brand.

With a design and concept inspired by the Warner Bros brand, the hotel has been developed with a total investment of \$112 million and features 257 rooms over eight levels, with a modern décor that celebrates Warner Bros' extensive film and television library. The property's contemporary design will also include signature WB themed restaurants, a premier spa and fitness club, and a shaded rooftop pool where guests can take in Yas Island's distinctive skyline.

Featuring one of the finest collections of Warner Bros archives, guests at the hotel will be treated to a journey of discovery through film and television, enjoying Warner Bros' rich history and library of timeless productions at every touchpoint from arrival to check-out.

Guests of The WB Abu Dhabi hotel begin their story as they pull up to the hotel and are greeted by digital screens that span the height of the building, playing original content created for the hotel. Before entering, the hotel visitors won't want to miss the iconic "Friends" fountain and will then enter the lobby and be drawn to the hotel's uniquely designed lobby columns. As guests continue their journey, the storytelling experience is further enriched with guest room corridors displaying a curated gallery of artwork.

Each of the hotel's 257 rooms is furnished with touches that tie to the legacy of rich storytelling that makes Warner Bros unique. The hotel has five dining options. Craft Services, located in the lobby lounge, offers a relaxing coffee break, while Sidekicks provides a place for socialising and interacting. For those lounging by the

pool in cabanas and sunbeds, The Matinee provides a casual dining option, while The Director's Club offers an elegant dining experience and The Overlook lounge provides 360-degree view of the city, adjacent Warner Bros theme park and sea views. ■



WB Abu Dhabi ... now complete.



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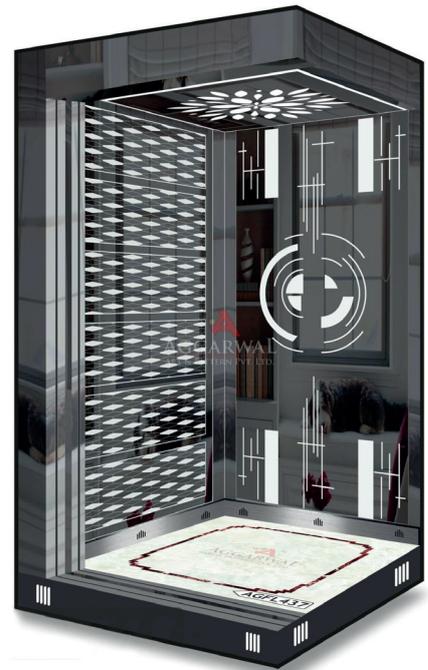
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Escon Express eyes luxury sector

ESCON Express Lifts' ability to offer custom-tailored and energy-efficient solutions that conform to strict quality standards and its wide product portfolio give it a competitive edge in meeting the requirements of the luxury end of the market, says a top official of the Bahrain-based company.

"Escon Express Lifts is backed by 25 years of experience in this industry," says Ramprasath Parthasarathi, Chairman and Managing Director. "We supply quality lifts as per the project requirements and offer a choice of elevators and special-purpose lifts. Our custom-tailored solutions are backed by efficient service and technical support that gives us an edge in the market. Our strength is our world-class technology, cost-effective process, strict quality parameters and extensive experience in this industry."

Escon Express Lifts' key products include hydraulic and manual lifts, goods/car elevators with a capacity of up to 10,000 kg, machine-room less (MRLs), auto door lifts that travel at speeds of up to 2.5 m per second (mps), panoramic/glass lifts, hospital lifts (stretcher lifts) in all capacities and automatic luxury elevators.

Its passenger range comprises manual as well as automatic elevators that can accommodate up to 26 passengers and travel at speeds of up to 4.5 mps.

The company's home elevators increase the value of the home, while allowing the disabled and the elderly to easily move through a multi-level dwelling, Ramprasath points out.

The company offers a vast range of functional and visually appealing designs created by its design professionals and built using innovative materials and accessories. "Our lifts are distinguished by being quiet as well as smooth and quick in operation and have a unique car structure," he adds.

According to Ramprasath, space is a major constraint for the hospitality and luxury villas sector. To address this issue, Escon Express Lifts provides customised lifts according to the space available in villas, high-rise buildings, hotels or restaurants.

"We design our cabins and doors according to the requirements by using the latest technology. Our lifts are designed with an

energy-saving integrated control panel, anti-nuisance protection suitable up to 4 mps pulse with modulation, traffic control system, group communication, fake call cancellation, advance opening ARD (automatic rescue device) and our products are designed to serve up to 64 floors," he explains.

Set up in Bahrain in 2018 as a joint venture by Express Lifts India – one of the top 10 lift manufacturers in India, the company has supplied its lifts for several villas and high-rise buildings in a number of areas of the kingdom, including Tubli, Amwaj, Samahej and Sitra, as well as in Saudi Arabia.

Most of these lifts feature designer cabins produced using the latest CNC machines to ensure the quality of its products.

Among its ongoing projects is Masaya, a Spanish restaurant located in Adliya, work on which is expected to be finished by the end of this year.

Its more challenging projects includes the recently completed Matam Charity project in Bahrain. "We have provided customised lifts as per the requirements of the client. It was a very critical site, involving a low pit, with opposite opening doors and low overhead height. We took care of all issues and we completed the project to the client's satisfaction," Ramprasath says.

The company recently launched its car



Bhupatray and Detroja ... driving business growth.

stacker lifts for which it has been receiving a lot of enquiries and has also bagged a few orders. These hydraulically-operated car stacker parking systems for two cars are designed for indoor and outdoor installations.

Escon Express Lifts is trying to increase market awareness of this product which, it believes, has great potential in the market.

While business levels have been steady over 2020 and 2021, Ramprasath expects the pace to pick up this quarter.

The Bahrain operation serves as Escon Express Lifts' Middle East office and the company is actively seeking opportunities in the regional market, especially in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Ramprasath says.

Thanks to the manufacturing capacity of its India-based parent firm, Escon Express Lifts ensures quick delivery with a maximum lead time of two months and provides round-the-clock back-up service.

Express Lifts India, which was founded in 1995 in Ahmedabad, has a manufacturing capacity of 1,500 lifts per year and has to date installed more than 35,000 elevators, says Bhupatray, Director at Express Lifts India.

The company has 11 branches in India and four overseas branches in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kenya and Nepal.

"To meet the demand for its products, Express Lifts India is currently setting up a larger factory in India covering 20,000 sq m and featuring a testing tower of 30 m with facilities for testing hydraulic and MRL lifts of up to 4 mps," says Vasanth Detroja, Director at Express Lifts India. ■



Matam Charity project ... featuring customised Escon Express lifts.