

INDIAN RESTAURANT SPY

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“Rajmahal Palace..is all set to come back to life as a bespoke destination.”

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Rs 9-Lakh-A-Night Suite to Top Attractions at Jaipur's Refurbished Rajmahal Palace

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By Sourish Bhattacharyya

A JAIPUR palace, which has had **Queen Elizabeth** and **Prince Philip** and **Jackie Kennedy** as house guests, and was previously managed by the Taj group of hotels, is all set to come back to life as a bespoke destination where the priciest suite will come with a price tag of Rs 9 lakh.

Rajmahal Palace is the sixth address to be added to the expanding portfolio of Sujan, which now operates five luxury hotels, camps and lodges, including one in Masai Mara, Kenya. Sujan's Chief Executive, **Jaisal Singh**, held out the promise of "experiential hospitality" and "personalised services" to the guests of this all-suite hotel set at the centre of magnificent lawns and with an organic kitchen garden of its own.



Sujan's Chief Executive Jaisal Singh (left) and Diya Kumari of the Jaipur royal family hold up the contract for the management of the Rajmahal Palace, Jaipur, which will reopen in November.

Singh has just signed a contract with **Diya Kumari** of the Jaipur royal family, who is also the BJP MLA from Sawai Madhopur, to manage the palace-hotel, which has been given a complete facelift by the accomplished designer, **Adil Ahmad**, creative director of **Charbagh, GoodEarth**.

"From the chandeliers to the wallpaper, Adil has redone and refurbished everything in the hotel," Singh said, adding that the palace, when it opens in November, will have 20 rooms and suites, including two royal apartments. One of the apartments, a two-bedroom set that was used by Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip when they were house guests at the palace, will come with a Rs 9-lakh-a-night tag. The entry-level suite is being priced at Rs 20,000 a night.

Ahmad has drawn his inspiration for the ambitious re-design from The City Palace, the residence of the former royal family. The design elements include traditional royal motifs, family crests, soft pastels and old world art pieces. The bar, for instance, will be studded with the trophies won by **Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II** and his son, **Bhawani Singh**, who were both avid polo players.

Jaisal Singh said the hotel will be different (and more expensive) because of special touches, like each guest being assigned an ADC (which is how guest relations executives have been rechristened at Rajmahal Palace). "You won't find a regular *lal maas* out here, but the Jaipuri *lal maas* as cooked in the kitchens of the royal family," he said, referring to Rajasthan's most famous meat preparation.



Pastel hues, royal motifs and period furniture dominated the refurbished fine-dining restaurant at Rajmahal Palace, Jaipur, which has been redesigned by Adil Ahmad, creative director, Charbagh, Good Earth.

"Similarly, the fried cheese toast will be made just the way the royal family likes to have it. It will be like living in The City Palace," Singh added.

Built in 1729, two years after Jaipur was formally inaugurated, Rajmahal Palace became the residence of the British Resident Political Officer of Rajputana in 1821. It was Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II, the celebrated 'Jai' more famous as the husband of Maharani Gayatri Devi, who turned it into his private residence in 1958, and a must-visit address for members of the international jet-set. The palace, described by Diya Kumari as "a precious piece of Jaipur's history", was converted into a hotel in 1979.

Will the palace once again be the sought-after destination of the world's rich and famous? That only time will tell.

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