



ment of Zuri Hotels & Resorts Pvt Ltd in October 2008.

"Launching during the slowdown really worked in our favour. While most companies were holding back on their marketing and advertising expense, we did all we could to ensure that we stood out in the crowd," says Abhishek Kamani (28), one of the directors of the company.

Today, the company operates seven luxury hotel properties at various locations in India, Kenya and the UK under different categories and collections, with investments of Rs 600 crore to Rs 800 crore having gone into its India hotels alone. Its Platinum Collection incorporates the luxurious Diani Reef Beach Resort and Spa in Kenya and The Zuri Kumarakom Resort & Spa in Kerala. The Lifestyle Collection houses The Zuri Whitefield in Bangalore, The Zuri Whitesands Resort & Casino, Varca, Goa and The Liner, UK, to emulate the lifestyle of clients who are patrons of certain brands. The Comfort Collection offers comfortable rooms and amenities that are comfortable on the guests' wallets as well. The Retreat by Zuri, Benaulim, Goa, and The Retreat by Zuri, a recently-launched property in Sikkim are a part of this collection.

Currently, Zuri is planning to add 100 keys in Zuri Whitesands, Goa, and another 100 keys in its property in Kenya, at an investment of Rs 60 crore per location. Both properties currently have 154 rooms each. It is planning an investment of Rs 150 crore to Rs 250 crore in Devanahalli, Bangalore, which is currently being evaluated. The company is also looking at adding one five-star luxury business hotel in Kenya, which is expected to be ready in 18 months.

Says Bobby Kamani, "We have been very aggressive in our growth and we have achieved a lot in the past two years of our existence. Going forward, we expect a similar expression in expansion, and our goal is to have 20 operating properties, both under management contracts and ownership in the next five years. We are also working on becoming the most preferred employer in the business by 2012." With such ambitious plans, the company has already started looking at a private equity route to fund its progress, and is currently in talks with PE players. With close to Rs 500 crore needed for its expansion plans, Zuri will look at off loading close to 20% of its stake in the near future.

hospitality sector was with the purchase of The Liner, UK, which set the ball rolling for their future in the hospitality industry. After The Liner, the group, backed by a consortium of investors from the Middle-East, ventured into the Indian hospitality sector. Their initial stint, initiated in 1999 under its parent company Phoenix Group Global, was through franchisee agreements of three of their properties to hospitality major Carlson Group, under the Radisson brand. A few years later, the company felt that the logical step would be to launch hotels under their own brand name, which led to the establish-

### Bobby Kamani and Abhishek Kamani

- **AGE:** Both are 28 years' old
- **BRAND:** The Zuri
- **BACKGROUND:** Entered the Indian hospitality segment in 1999 through franchising agreements with Carlson Group under Zuri Group's parent company, Phoenix Group, and then went on to creating the Zuri brand in 2008
- **FIRST HOTEL:** February 2009, The Zuri, Whitefield, Bangalore
- **NUMBER OF HOTELS (2010):** 7 luxury properties in India, UK and Kenya
- **INVESTMENT:** Rs 600 crore to Rs 800 crore in Indian operations alone.
- **PLANS:** To have 20 operating properties, both through ownership and management contracts, in the next five years

# STEADY IN THE SLOWDOWN

Shreya Roy

WHEN ZURI Group Global launched its first hotel in Bangalore in 2009—built with an investment of Rs 200 crore—during the height of the slowdown, several experts questioned the timing and many were

sceptical about the success of the venture. Directors Bobby and Abhishek Kamani, however, decided to go all out with aggressive branding and marketing of their first self-managed Indian project. And, more than a year later, the two feel that the gamble paid off.

The company's first foray into the