**Hospitality’s highest flyers honoured at FHS Awards**

*Amit Nayak, Ranjan Nadarajah and Assia Riccio recognised at Future Hospitality Summit in Dubai*

**Dubai, UAE. 21 September 2022.** The top players in the Middle East and Africa’s hospitality sector were honoured at the Future Hospitality Summit Awards today in the presence of Founding Patron of the Arabian Hospitality Investment Conference (AHIC), His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, Chairman of Dubai Airports and Chairman & Chief Executive of Emirates Airline & Group.

The FHS **Leadership Award, Lifetime Award for Services to the Industry** and the **Be The Change Award** winners were named as **Amit Nayak, Ranjan Nadarajah and Assia Riccio** respectively, following nominations and selections by the FHS Advisory Board and key industry peers for their outstanding contributions and leadership.

**Amit Nayak,** Vice President of the Hospitality Asset Managers Association (HAMA) Middle East and Africa, received the **Leadership Award** in recognition of his 20-plus year career in asset management, private equity and operations across the region. Amit is a mentor at Intelak Dubai, sits on the executive board of the Cornell University Alumni Association for GCC, and is a board member of the UAE Restaurants Group.

The **Lifetime Award for Services to the Industry** went to the late **Ranjan Nadarajah** in honour of his remarkable leadership and unparalleled services to the sector. The legendary Dubai hotelier, who sadly passed away in March this year after a career spanning several decades, was known as a ‘thorough gentlemen, loved and respected by peers, fellow hoteliers, industry leaders and associates’. Nadarajah was senior advisor to Wasl Hospitality and GM of Dubai International Hotel at Dubai International Airport. He was also the long-serving GM at Le Méridien Dubai Hotel & Conference Centre, where he worked for more than 35 years. The award was proudly accepted by his family.

**Assia Riccio,** Founder & CEO, Evolvin’ Women, won the ***Be The Change Award*** in recognition of her work as a champion of change for the hospitality industry. A pioneer in supporting the development of unemployed women from under-privileged background and female farmers in developing countries, Assia is the former Group Learning and Development Manager at Jumeirah Restaurants Group, where she developed strategies for more than 1,000 employees across a portfolio of 42 restaurants.

Commenting on receiving the award on stage today Assia said: "Being recognised by the Future of Hospitality Summit, for 'Be The Change' award is an incredibly meaningful milestone for us at Evolvin' Women. Our strategic partners in the hospitality field have been intrinsic to our success, and the success of the amazing women who have gone through our programme and thrived.

We are on a mission to empower more women and propel  gender equality in our society, but we cannot achieve this alone, so we request the hospitality industry to join us - because when we all unite, there is tremendous potential to bring more meaningful change and pave the path for an equitable, resilient and sustainable future."

**Jonathan Worsley, Chairman of The Bench, organiser of FHS**, said: “We are honoured and proud to celebrate our FHS Award winners, whose outstanding contributions, achievements and leadership are pivotal to the region’s past, present and future hospitality sector. Our three winners are exemplary in their work, role models for up-and-coming industry stars, and a shining example of effectively leading the way to enhance the region’s world-class, ever-growing hospitality sector.”

FHS was attended by nearly 1,000 delegates and featured 185 top-flight speakers, with three days of high-level debate, networking and events, all centred around the theme Lead the Change.

-ENDS-

**Note to Editors:**

About The Bench

The Benchhas established a legacy for delivering world-leading investment forums and conferences in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. The key principle behind these platforms has remained ‘dealmaking’. Transforming the way business connect, Bench has developed a reputation for creating innovative and high-impact meeting spaces for the industry.

For over two decades - government leaders, tourism ministries, global travel & tourism associations, the world’s most influential hospitality brands, hotel owners & investors, renowned restaurant groups, airlines & aviation authorities, destination developers, asset managers, financial groups and consultants – have been participating in The Bench’s events for their respective objectives. These include AHIC, AHIF, GRIF, FHS, AHF, IDEEA, AviaDev and RENEW –where industry players showcase their brands, position themselves as thought leaders or innovators, and connect with the right opportunities and knowledge.

Learn more on **thebench.com**

About MEED

Launched on International Women’s Day 1957, the Middle East Economic Digest, MEED, is a well-known and trusted brand used by governments and businesses operating in the region.

Encompassing a business intelligence service, digital media, publications and events MEED provides exclusive daily news, data and analysis.  We are responsible for keeping our audiences of subscribers, registered users and event attendees informed, helping to facilitate decision making and connections.

Our marketing solutions team provides clients with access to our audiences.  We partner with local and international companies who need to reach our high-value communities.   In consultation with our clients, we utilise tried and tested methods to target and engage decision makers to announce and explain, lead and grow and to contact and convert business leaders into customers.

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Future Hospitality Summit (FHS)

Date: 19-21 September 2022

Location: Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai, UAE

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