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Bangkok, 18 May 2020: As travellers are embracing the new normal of travel and hotels are preparing to welcome guests back, Avani Hotels & Resorts is rolling out new health and safety measures across its portfolio. Named AvaniSHIELD, the programme will see all 32 properties in 18 countries gradually adopt a range of heightened hygiene and sanitising standards to ensure the health and safety of guests and team members.

The primary initiatives will be driven by the adoption of new technology, such as digital check-in/check-out as well as concierge service, copper protection coating, UVC light and HEPA-grade air purifiers, all in compliance with the guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

“Our life has been impacted, but our spirit to travel will never fade,” said Javier Pardo, Vice President of Operations for Avani Hotels & Resorts. “The implementation of new health and safety standards adds an additional layer of protection by bringing peace of mind to Avani guests and team members, as well as emphasising our commitment to ensuring health and safety, without compromising on service quality.”

“Not stopping at these measures, we are currently reviewing additional initiatives focusing on rebuilding the environment and the health of the planet threatened by climate change, such as our zero-trash programme and carbon footprint reduction measures,” he continued.

Touchless Service

• Contactless greetings – to practice physical distancing, Avani team members will be relying on country-specific hand gestures, such as the traditional Thai wai greeting; Korean jeol bowing; the hand-over-heart gesture, and even the Vulcan salute popularised by Star Trek.
• Digital pre-arrival check-in & check-out – after filling out registration cards on their mobile devices on the way to the hotel, guests will find their room key waiting for them at reception. Prior to check-out, guests will be able to settle their bill via a secure online payment system and receive the receipt via email – a secure as well as environmentally-friendly solution.
• Digital Concierge App – a live chat solution enabling direct contact with guest service will be launching soon, as well as allowing guests to browse menus, order in-room dining and book off-property experiences.

Safety & Hygiene Technology
• Cu+ Copper Protection Materials – high touch surfaces such as door handles and elevator buttons will be covered with anti-microbial copper protection film (copper has been used as a disinfectant since the times of ancient Egypt). Research indicates that SARS-CoV2 virus survives the least amount of time on copper, in addition to a 'halo effect' extended to surrounding surfaces.
• Ultra Violet C Sterilisation – Front Office will be utilising UVC sterilisation boxes to disinfect key cards, stationery and other high touch objects. Guests can request a complimentary mobile device disinfecting service. In addition, the housekeeping team has begun testing a cleaning method with UVC light as an extra layer of protection after cleaning which is proven to kill germs and bacteria with 99.99% effectiveness.
• HEPA-grade Bio Filter – select properties will be adding HEPA-grade Air Purifiers as an extra step in the standard guest room and gym cleaning process. These can remove airborne viruses, bacteria and allergens of 0.01 micron (10 nanometres) in size with 99.99% effectiveness.
• Disinfectant of Incoming Objects – all hotels will also be setting up disinfectant processes to sanitise incoming luggage, boxes and supplies.

The Extra Mile for Guest & Team Members Safety

Even before the outbreak of 2019-nCoV, Avani has been working closely with Ecolab and will continue doing so to ensure that all materials and measures adhere to Ecolab, WHO and, for chemical treatment, EPA standards.

As an extra precaution in the post-Covid-19 world, each Avani hotel will employ the following efforts:
• A dedicated AvaniSHIELD Agent responsible for implementing new cleaning protocols, as well as ensuring the latest health and safety guidelines are communicated to the team in a timely manner. The role will also include monitoring the overall health of Avani team members and conducting training sessions on new health and safety regulations.
• Breathing Room – After cleaning, each guest room will be sealed for 24 hours – a resting period during which time the housekeeping team cannot enter. This waiting period will become mandatory prior to allocating rooms to guests.
• All new or existing partners, suppliers and third parties such as tour operators and transportation service providers will need to comply with the new safety measures, regular sanitising and ensuring guest protection in compliance with Avani's 'Trusted Partner Programme'. For Thailand hotels, these must be in line with the guidelines of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), an organisation working with multiple government bodies in setting up Thailand Safety and Health Administration (SHA).
• At the restaurants, buffets will be replaced with à la minute food preparation focusing on freshness, safe food handling and Avani's zero waste initiative. Culinary teams are being retrained in food preparation in the post-Covid-19 world. Additionally, restaurants will be spacing out tables to practice physical distancing, and walk-in guests will be asked for their contact details to facilitate contact tracing. Menus will be available digitally or via QR code on a smartphone.

• AvaniFit Gyms will be following the physical distancing rule, ensuring that only a small number of guests are exercising at a given time, providing a breathing period after each use, and implementing new sanitising measures such as anti-viral coating. Avani is also looking into in-room workout gear and training videos.
• Avani has also released an internal protocol regulating the use of protective face masks, frequency of temperature checks and a disinfection process for team members entering work premises, with measures varying by country. While all team members will be required to wear certified protection masks, to lighten the mood Avani has launched a ‘Smile through The Heart’ initiative encouraging the team to let their personality shine through by decorating and personalising face masks.