

# HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA fhrai magazine

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**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President  
FHRAI

*Dear fellow members,*

**I**would like to begin by extending a very warm welcome to Shri. Arvind Singh ji, IAS, on his new assignment as Secretary, Ministry of Tourism. A dynamic officer with various successful stints at the state, Central and international level, we are confident that Shri. Singh will immediately address the concerns of the hospitality and tourism industry, which has been the hardest hit due to the pandemic. We look forward to working closely with him in the immediate future.

After being completely ignored in the latest Union Budget of 2021, we have written to our Hon'ble Prime Minister and expressed our dismay and disappointment on the gross neglect shown to the hospitality sector. We are still hopeful that the government will look into our requests/prayers and come up with a hospitality sector-specific relief package soon. Till then, we shall rigorously follow-up with the concerned ministries and departments for and on behalf of the entire industry. A ray of hope was seen, lately, when the state governments came forward to support the hospitality industry by way of granting the industry status. At an event held in Mumbai, the FHRAI along with HRAWI felicitated State Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray for making Maharashtra the first state to award its hospitality sector the industry status. Mrs. Valsa Nair, Principal Secretary, Tourism & Excise, government of Maharashtra was also present during the event. Following the benchmark set by the state of Maharashtra and our representations to them for the same, the govts of Karnataka and Telangana have also shown inclination to grant industry status to the hospitality sector. We are coordinating closely with them and other states also, having already made representations for the same to be done pan India for the same.

Recently an MoU has been signed between HRANI and Indian Railway Catering and Tourism

Corporation (IRCTC), under which HRANI and FHRAI members would be able to list their room rate and inventory on the IRCTC booking engine portal. The objective of signing the MoU has been to promote domestic tourism and reduce the customer acquisition cost. Till July 31, integration charges have been waived off and commission payable is 10 per cent for all hotels and 5 per cent for classified hotels. To promote self-certification and increased self-reliance, FHRAI and regional associations will also be authorised to certify unclassified hotels to have 2-, 3-, 4- and 5-star facilities. Such FHRAI certified hotels will also be liable to pay only a 5 per cent commission. We are following up with the authorities to get this implemented pan India with the regional railway offices also.

FHRAI has also made a representation to recognise all hospitality and tourism workers to be treated as frontline COVID workers and be eligible for priority COVID vaccination. After all, we are the premier contact for a traveller after he checks out of the airport/train/bus/automobile.

In the meanwhile, being a responsible industry, let us unflinchingly continue to follow all safety and hygiene protocols till we have won this battle.

Be safe.

**Note:** The February 2021 edition of the FHRAI magazine will not be available as a printed version due to the pandemic. However, the e-version of the same shall be available on the FHRAI website and circulated to all members as broadcast on registered email.

*With kind regards,*

*Gurbaxish Singh Kohli*  
Vice President, FHRAI



**Till July 31,  
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been waived off  
and commission  
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and 5% for  
classified hotels**





# FEBRUARY 2021

## DEMAND CORRELATED TO AIR TRAFFIC 14

HVS ANAROCK's report 'Room for Growth' says that rising disposable income, low-cost carriers & air connectivity through UDAN has resulted in growth of air passenger traffic..

COVER IMAGE:  
PRIIDE GROUP OF HOTELS



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Now that Maharashtra has awarded its hospitality sector an industry status, its govt will soon roll out reforms for the sector, confirms Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray.

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-At India Tourism Mart (ITM) 2021, held from February 18-20, FHRAI conducted a virtual session on 'Indian Cuisine - The Emerging Balance of Power & Taste'.



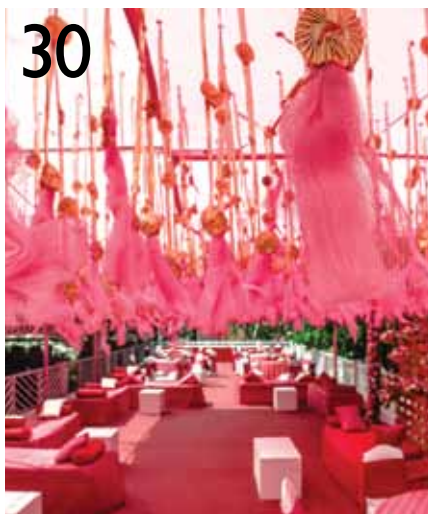
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With domestic travel picking pace, hotels are seeing new travel trends. GMs of prominent ibis properties in Bengaluru, Goa, New Delhi and Mumbai share hospitality trends.

## ONE-STOP SOLUTION 30

Hoteliers opine that guests will prefer a one-stop solution to their event needs.



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Tent City 1 is basking in the glory of the buzz created by the Statue of Unity close by. Bhavik Sheth, Finance & Operation Manager, Lallooji & Sons, discusses their plans.



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### FHRAI

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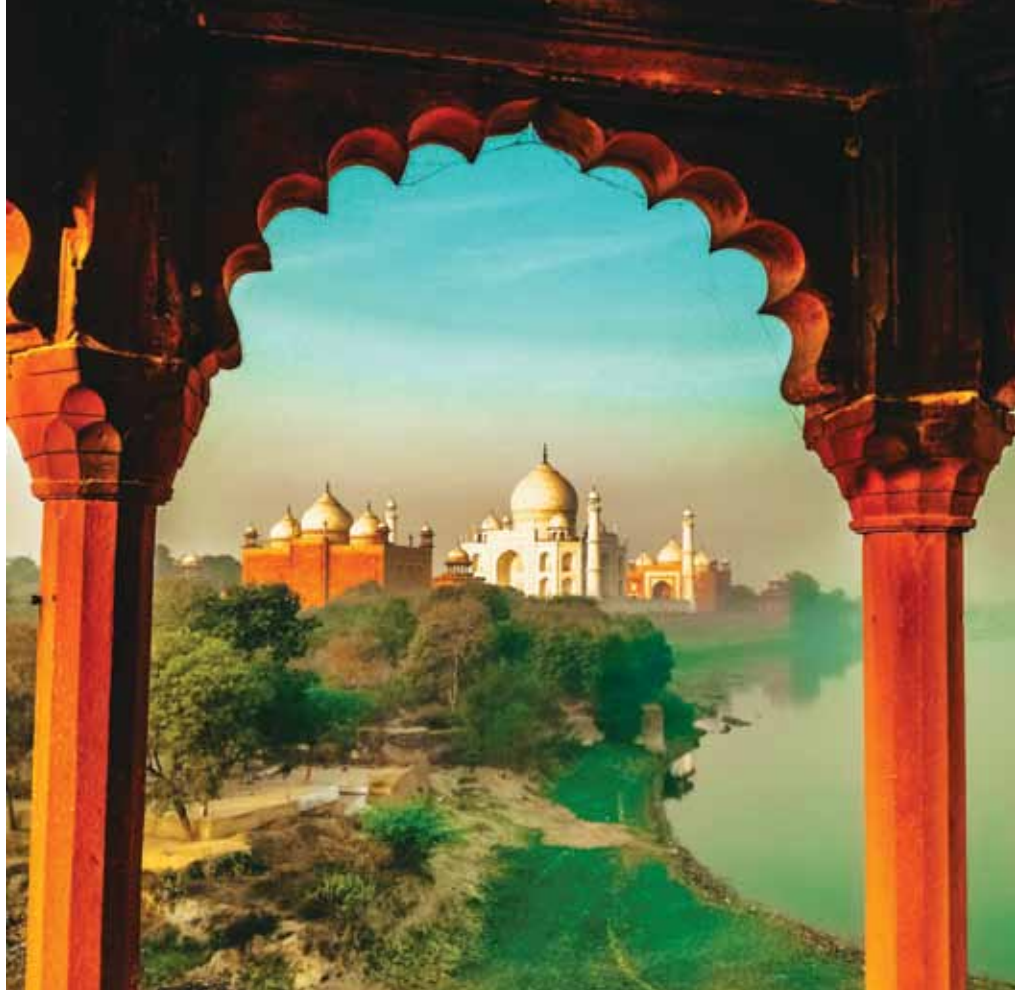
# Promote domestic tourism: FHRAI

FHRAI has pressed on the need to encourage local tourism under MOT's Dekho Apna Desh Pledge campaign

**F**HRAI has appealed to GOI to aggressively promote domestic tourism in the New Year. The apex hospitality association has pressed on the need to encourage local tourism under the Ministry of Tourism's Dekho Apna Desh Pledge campaign while the country remains closed to international tourists. India's tourism and hospitality sectors have incurred the largest collateral damage of the COVID-19 pandemic and every small or big step to revive the sector will be crucial in the long-term health of both the sector and the country's economy. The FHRAI has recommended incentivising domestic tourism by offering tax exemption under Section 80C of up to ₹50,000 to Indians which will encourage them to travel.

"The Hon'ble PM has always spoken about how important Indian tourism is to the country. We believe that with the right kind of messaging and support from the government, India's domestic tourism could flourish. Make in India or Vocal for Local initiatives are on the same line as Dekho Apna Desh and there couldn't be a more opportune time to push the throttle on promoting domestic tourism.

The government could allow valid GST hotel bills of any state other than the home state of the individual assessee exempt under Section 80C for an additional amount of ₹50,000. The potential additional tax saving will encourage citizens to travel within India and will give impetus to hotels as well as ancillary industries," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI



**With support from the govt, domestic tourism could flourish**

"Over 26 million Indian nationals travelled overseas in 2019. Now is the time these travellers can explore their own country. We request the government to urge people to stay and travel within India. The country has some of the best coastlines and beaches in the world, its hill stations and architectural wonders are unparalleled, and we also have pilgrimage attractions. There is every reason that the domestic travellers should explore their own country and the government just needs to induce this want to see one's



**Pradeep Shetty**  
Sr. Vice President, HRAWI



**We request the govt to urge people to stay and travel within India**

own country. This will save many small and medium-size businesses from imminent and permanent closure," adds **Pradeep Shetty**, Jt. Hon Secretary, FHRAI.

"Hotels and restaurants are expecting sector-specific policy announcements from the Finance Ministry under the leadership of Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman. Travel culture in the country is on the rise and if the domestic tourist is offered incentive, tourism could witness a boom at home," concludes Kohli.

# Meet the new Tourism Secy

Arvind Singh has replaced Yogendra Tripathy as Secretary – Tourism. The change is part of a reshuffle announced by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

**A**rvind Singh, Chairman, Airports Authority of India (AAI) has replaced Yogendra Tripathy as Secretary – Tourism, Government of India.

The change at the Tourism Ministry is part of a reshuffle announced by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet in the top level Indian Administrative Services responsibilities. Tripathy who has been Secretary Tourism since November 2018 has been shifted to the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilisers as Secretary.

Arvind Singh, a 1988-batch IAS of Maharashtra cadre has come into the Tourism Ministry as Secretary after being Chairman of the AAI for more than a year. Singh has handled various important responsibilities in both home cadre Maharashtra as well as at the Centre. He joined the IAS in 1988 after acquiring Bachelor's and Master's degrees in economics from St. Stephen's College, Delhi & the Delhi School of Economics. His first



**Arvind Singh**  
Tourism Secretary, GOI

assignment was as Assistant Collector at Aurangabad from 1990-1992. Later, he served

as Chief Executive Officer of Aurangabad Zila Parishad from 1992-94 and as Chief Executive Officer of Nagpur Zilla Parishad from 1994-96. During 1997-98, he worked in the office of the Chief Secretary, Maharashtra, at Mumbai before moving to Kolhapur as District Collector from 1998 to 2001.

He was CMD of Maharashtra State Power Generation Corporation and Additional Chief Secretary, Power, Maharashtra before becoming Chairman, AAI. He also held responsible positions in various Central departments of Shipping, Chemicals and Fertilizers and Finance in the past. He served at the Embassy of India, Tokyo as Minister (Economic & Commerce) between 2014-17.



**Singh has handled important roles in Maha as well as at the Centre**



## Pathbreaking initiatives

"We earnestly hope that some of the long pending requests such as ease of doing business, will be realised in the days to come," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, VP, FHRAI.

**I**n a special meeting to bid farewell to Yogendra Tripathi, IAS, Secretary – Chemicals & Petrochemicals and to welcome Arvind Singh, IAS, Secretary-Tourism, **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI, said, "The tourism and hospitality sector are deeply indebted to Shri Tripathi for taking many pathbreaking initiatives aimed at the development of tourism sector. We appreciate his valuable contributions in reducing the GST rate on hotel rooms with tariffs up to ₹7,500 per night to 12% from 18%. Another important decision was the introduction of new category of e-tourist visa for five years with multiple entry, in addition to the existing e-tourist visa for one

year and introduction of a new category of e-tourist visa valid for one month with double entry. We are also very grateful to him for leading the way in changing the definition of MSMEs thereby ensuring inclusion of service sector under the MSME definition. We extend our best greetings and success in all the future



**We look forward to intervention from MOT in the form of bold structural reforms**



endeavours of Shri Tripathi," stated Kohli. "On behalf of FHRAI, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Shri Arvind Singh, IAS, as the Secretary of Ministry of Tourism (MOT). As you are taking over at a very tumultuous time for the industry, we look forward to some immediate intervention from the MOT in the form of bold structural reforms, policy tweaks and revisions aimed at keeping the tourism and hospitality sector afloat. We earnestly hope that some of the long pending requests of the industry such as ease of doing business in hospitality, industry status to hospitality across the country and bringing tourism under Concurrent list of the Constitution, will be realised in the days to come," he concluded.





# Virtual FoSTaC training

HRANI has built a bridge for hospitality professionals to enhance their food safety knowledge and implement the highest standards of food safety in their units.

**C**ontinuing the efforts of spreading awareness amongst FBOs and members, Hotel and Restaurant Association of Northern India (HRANI) recently concluded its virtual FoSTaC training session for food handlers. The association has built a bridge for the hospitality professionals to enhance their food safety knowledge which has been imparted by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and in turn practically implement the highest standards of food safety in their units. While conducting the session, Dr. Vikas Gupta, Professor, Amity University gave a detailed presentation on the requirements of 'FoSTaC-Advance Catering' with examples and case studies for better understanding.

"The training was conducted through virtual mode and as a 'training partner' we have ensured that the training modules meet the expectations in terms of being interactive including team involvement.



Our initiative of conducting virtual training has been appreciated by our trainee participants and I am happy to share their valuable feedback posted to us," stated **Renu Thapliyal**, Secretary General, HRANI. She further added, "In the interest of our members, the next session has been scheduled for February 26, 2021."

During these trying times, FSSAI has made the following training mandatory:

**Food Safety Supervisor:** For every 25 food handlers or less, there should be one Food Safety Supervisor (FSS) trained under the Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC), per site

**COVID-19 Training:** Every food handler needs to undergo this awareness training to understand the extra precautions to be taken during the COVID pandemic.

FoSTaC draws on years of hands-on experience to provide systematic training as well as developmental solutions. All its training sessions are conducted by a certified FSSAI trainer, providing comprehensive training modules to help one comply with the regulatory standards.



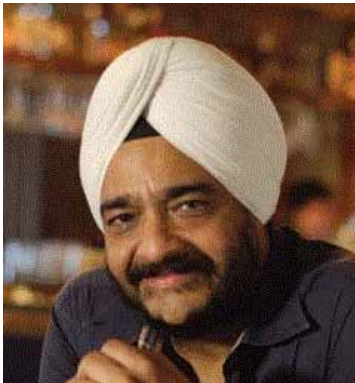
**In the interest of our members, the next session has been scheduled for Feb 26**





# Disappointed with budget

FHRAI has written to the Hon'ble Prime Minister expressing disappointment with the gross neglect shown to the hospitality sector in the budget and has sought a meeting with him.



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI



**FHRAI has been vociferously advocating for relief measures**



After being completely ignored in the latest Union Budget 2021, the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has written to the Hon'ble Prime Minister – Shri Narendra Modi expressing disappointment and has sought a meeting with him. The apex hospitality association has conveyed dismay and disappointment on the gross neglect shown to the hospitality sector in the budget.

The FHRAI has stated its disbelief on the 19 per cent retrenchment in the budget allocation for the Ministry of Tourism at a time when the sector is facing the worst crisis for tourism. In the absence of a sector-specific stimulus package, at least 30 to 40 per cent restaurants and 20 to 30 per cent hotels in the country are facing imminent shutdown of business, resulting into millions of job losses.

"We are really disheartened to see that tourism and hospitality – the biggest casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic have been continuously ignored by the government ever since the pandemic hit the country. It did not even find a mention in the budget presented by the Finance Minister. The FHRAI has been vociferously



**Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**  
President, HRANI



**The budget knocked off 19% from the budget allocated for MOT**

advocating for some real relief measures to help the sector come out of the biggest crisis. Despite our numerous representations over the last ten months and multiple meetings with the highest echelons in the government, the hospitality sector has been blatantly ignored.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister has always been a strong proponent of India's tourism potential. We are hoping that he will understand and offer a remedy for the industry's concerns for which we have sought a meeting with him," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

As per a recent report, the full year occupancy of the hotels in the country in the year 2020 was at 34.5 per cent and occupancy during the pandemic period was at 27.8 per cent. Several key markets reported pandemic period RevPAR in Rupees in the 100s with Ahmedabad at the bottom with RevPAR at ₹672.

"Tourism and hospitality account for close to 10 per cent of India's GDP and support around 90 million jobs. It generated Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) to the tune of ₹194,881 crores (US\$ 29.96 billion) in 2019 and yet, the sector



**D V S Somaraju**  
Hon. Treasurer, FHRAI



**We wish to meet the PM and apprise him of the hardships we face**

did not even find a mention in the Budget presented by the Hon'ble Finance Minister. Additionally, the Union Budget 2021 knocked off 19 per cent from the Budget allocated for the Ministry of Tourism which has come as a severe blow to the revival efforts of the tourism industry in India which is reeling from huge losses due to the coronavirus crisis," says **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, HRANI.

The FHRAI has stated that while a majority of the sectors are on the recovery path the hospitality sector continues to bleed and is staring at an uncertain future. The industry continues to hope for sector specific reliefs from the government.

"We plead the Hon'ble PM to take cognizance of the harrowing situation of the hospitality sector and take urgent remedial measures to prevent it from succumbing. We wish to meet the PM in person and apprise him of the hardships faced by the hospitality sector. We feel confident that after he hears us, he will intervene and offer our industry the much-needed government support," concludes **D V S Somaraju**, Hon. Treasurer, FHRAI.

# HRANI, IRCTC partnership

IRCTC has allowed to offer a 10% commission from the listed Member Units of HRANI along with complete waiver of integration charges. The waiver will be applicable till July 31.

HRANI

**H**otel and Restaurant Association of Northern India (HRANI) and Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), had signed a MoU last year, under which HRANI hotel members would be able to list their room rate and inventory on IRCTC booking engine portal. The objective of signing the MoU has been to promote domestic tourism and reduce the customer acquisition cost.

To facilitate the members further, HRANI has pursued for waiver on integration charges and reduced commission including online integration to ease the process which has been agreed by IRCTC and a revised EOI has been issued accordingly. A virtual meeting to discuss the details was also held with IRCTC. As per the MoU



**Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**  
President, HRANI

“**Customer acquisition cost will reduce**”

between IRCTC and HRANI, IRCTC has allowed to offer a 10 per cent commission from the listed Member Units of HRANI along with complete waiver of integration charges. The waiver will be applicable till July 31 of this year.

“We are thankful to Madam Rajni Hasija, Chairman & Managing Director, IRCTC and her team for acceding to our submissions especially when the industry is going through tough times,” stated **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, HRANI and Vice President, FHRAI. “I firmly believe that this initiative of HRANI will help our hotel members to reduce the customer acquisition cost in a big way and will create a win-win situation for both the hoteliers as well as the end consumers,” he added.

## Accolade for Sudesh Poddar

**Sudesh Poddar**, President of HRAEI, was conferred with the prestigious 'Jewel of Bengal' award for his contribution to hospitality sector during the early stages of COVID-19.



HRANI

**P**oddar co-ordinated with the state government to convert many hotels to quarantine centres in the early stages of COVID-19. Over 2,000 rooms of two-star, three-star and four-star hotels were offered on pay-and-

“**Poddar was given the 'Jewel of Bengal' award by DineOut SteppinOut Night Market**”

use basis at a highly subsidised rate. Under his guidance, several hotels were converted into satellite centres of some hospitals when the pandemic was at its worst stage. In addition to this, after inclusion of Kolkata in the Vande Bharat Mission, 2,650

rooms in Kolkata hotels were opened up for paid quarantine of citizens who are arriving from abroad under his guidance. To facilitate transfer of guests who arrived in Kolkata from abroad the HRAEI opened a special counter at Kolkata Airport. He represented HRAEI in a meeting with the Chief Minister of West Bengal with a request to the state government to organise health insurance for the people who were attending COVID patients in quarantine centres. The 'Jewel of Bengal' award was given to Poddar by DineOut SteppinOut Night Market in a glittering ceremony at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Calcutta on January 30.



# BMC withdraws notification

HRAWI has welcomed BMC's move to withdraw a notification issued on February 5, 2021 restricting the sale of liquor at restaurants beyond 11:30 pm.

**T**he HRAWI has welcomed the BMC's move to withdraw a notification issued on the evening of February 5, 2021 restricting the sale of liquor at restaurants beyond 11:30 pm. The notification has been withdrawn effective the morning of February 6 which has brought respite to restaurants and bars in the city. However, many restaurants expressed discontent over the last minute notification issued by the BMC which caused chaos, and disruption of business as well as a lot of confusion. Quite a few restaurants did not receive any official notification while others complained about having received the notification over WhatsApp and were unsure of its legitimacy. Based on information received from its restaurant members, the HRAWI sought clarification from the BMC and requested for withdrawing the notification with immediate effect.

"We are glad that the BMC understood the kind of disorder such last minute notifications can cause to the restaurant industry and withdrew the notification restricting sale of liquor post 11:30 pm. We thank the Commissioner of the MCGM and the Principal Secretary Excise for expeditiously issuing a fresh notification withdrawing the restriction. The earlier notification would have just compounded the industry's woes but by withdrawing it swiftly, the government has instilled our faith back in it," says **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI.

Three days ago, the Minister of Tourism – Aaditya Thackeray had announced about the state's intention to kick-start nightlife in Mumbai by allowing restaurants to operate 24/7. "Lot of restaurateurs did not receive the notification informing about the

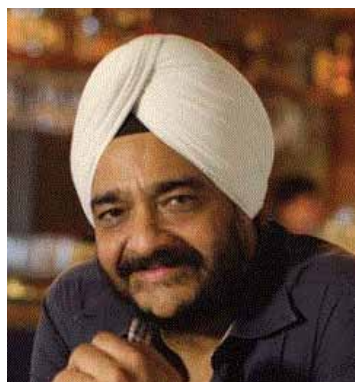


**Sherry Bhatia**  
President, HRAWI



**The govt has  
instilled our faith  
back in it**

restriction on liquor sale timing. We do not know how they had intended to reach out to all the restaurants at such a short notice. We are not even sure if the notification was effective immediately. We immediately appealed against the notice and presented the facts, and thankfully the notification has been withdrawn with immediate effect as per a fresh circular



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI



**We immediately  
appealed against  
the notice**

issued. We hope the implementing agencies have been also adequately informed. We thank the BMC and Excise departments for understanding our predicament and taking back an order which would've hurt an already ailing industry even further," concludes **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, HRAWI spokesperson & Vice President, FHRAI.



# HSAA: Always ready to go the extra mile

With over 32 years of experience in the field of interiors, HS Ahuja & Associates (HSAA) has always believed in delivering the best in the design industry.



Hema

**H**SA has an ideology of providing value to customers and has won clients over with fascinating creations and innovative methods.

**Hema**, Principal Interior Designer at HSAA, says, "We value your inputs, understand your needs, care for your satisfaction and also strive to establish strong and lasting relationships. Some of our prestigious clients are Ramada Hotel, Sagar Ratna, Barco's, Oxford Public School, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, the list could go on. We have demonstrated our competence in luxurious residential interiors, cafe, restaurant & hotel

designs, villas, schools, architectural consulting, and commercial concepts. We abide by the most superior standards of interior design, focusing not just on aesthetic design. HSAA breathes life into the vision of your ideal home or office. It has now become our obsession to fulfill your dreams with the most impeccable marvels, and for this we are always ready to go the extra mile."

She goes on to add, "HSAA has received prestigious awards like MAMR India's most prominent architect and design awards and national icons award. We have been awarded for 'Innovation in Hotel & Restaurant Interiors' this year.. Our dedication makes us different from the rest, and our obsession for perfection is fuelled by an endless appetite for possibilities."



**Awarded for Innovation in Hotel and Restaurant Interior (2021)**

"After months of creative brainstorming and hard work, it really pays off when we see that 'surprising' smile on the face of our clients. Today, we are equipped with two massive in-house production facilities and our clientele has reached over 600 projects. Our creative team of experts come up with ideas which stand out from the competition. We offer end-to-end solutions including interior, 3D, civil custom paintings, furniture custom lighting and almost everything that is needed to transform your dreams into reality," concludes Hema.





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# Demand correlated to air passenger traffic

HVS ANAROCK's report 'Room for Growth' states that the rise in disposable incomes & large number of low-cost carriers have resulted in the growth of air passenger traffic.



**Note:** \* Delhi NCR refers to Delhi and Gurugram only

**Sources:** 'Worldwide Airport Traffic Report, Calendar Year 2019', Airports Council International; Airports Authority of India; Industry Sources; Media Reports; Compiled by HVS ANAROCK Research.

India is set to become the world's third-largest aviation market by 2024-25, according to the International Air Transport Association. The number of operational airports in the country have increased significantly from 50 in 2000 to 137 in 2019, with plans in place for an additional 100 airports by 2024. But the total size of the branded hotels segment in the country is ~140,000 rooms, smaller than the total inventory of Shanghai.

Rising disposable income combined with the introduction of low-cost carriers and the improving air connectivity through the UDAN scheme has resulted in significant growth of air passenger traffic in India. The hotels sector relies heavily on the aviation sector from demand perspective, with a high degree of correlation between growth of hotels sector and that of airline traffic. The growing aviation market will continue to be a strong catalyst for the hotels sector. Delhi, the busiest airport in the country handled



## The growing aviation market will continue to be a strong catalyst for the hotels sector

over 68.5 mn passengers in 2019, nearly the same amount handled by Singapore's Changi Airport, and not too far off from that of Shanghai. But the penetration of hotel supply to passenger traffic is less than half of the closest international city in Asia.

### AIR TRAFFIC GROWTH V/S HOTEL ROOM SUPPLY GROWTH (2015-2019)

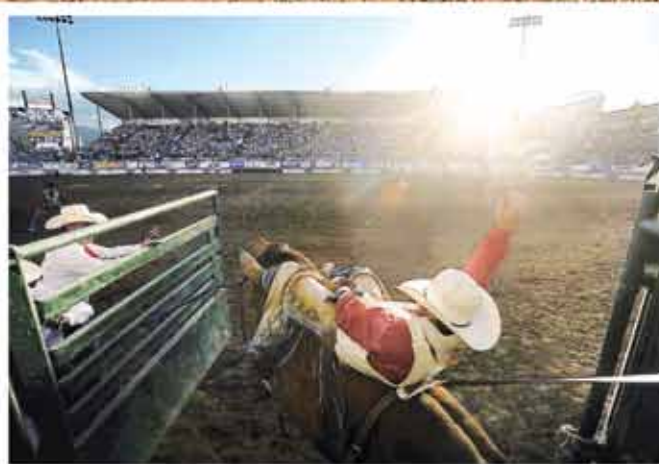
Delhi's newly announced Jewar Airport (capacity of 12 mn passengers per year after phase 1) to Mumbai's planned development in Navi Mumbai (capacity of 10 mn passengers per year on completion of phase 1) and Bengaluru's Terminal 2 expansion work, which had begun pre-COVID (additional capacity of 25 mn passengers per annum in phase

1), the additional capacity pre-COVID was set to be absorbed between 2024-2027. While COVID has reset the timelines for both the sectors, new hotel supply growth is expected to be further constrained. Until 2019, Delhi NCR, Mumbai and Bengaluru witnessed the lowest hotel supply growth compared to airline passenger growth. The increasing passenger traffic in these cities will add pressure to the existing hotel supply. While most Asian markets witnessed either nearly flat or mid-single digit air passenger traffic growth rates, both Delhi NCR and Bengaluru, outshined by growing in double digits. The rate of growth in Delhi NCR combined with its absolute passenger traffic showcases the market's potential for growth.





# Cowboy Corridor in Nevada





# Budget dismays

Regional Presidents opine that after a year of losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry was expecting that the budget would help the sector until demand revives.

Neha Rawat



**Sherry Bhatia**  
President, HRAWI

## INDUSTRY HAS BEEN TOTALLY IGNORED

The hospitality industry feels dejected because this year's Union Budget which was very critical for the industry has totally ignored it. The industry has no foreign exchange earnings and revenues are less than 10 per cent of pre-pandemic levels from domestic travellers. The pandemic has affected this industry the worst and has inflicted job losses, permanent closures and increased debt burden.

## SECTOR-SPECIFIC RELIEFS OVERLOOKED

While the Union Budget hasn't traditionally doled out reforms

“Achieving even 25% of pre-pandemic revenues in the near future seems unlikely”

for the hospitality sector, after a year of losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the travel and tourism industry was expecting that the budget would help the sector until demand revives. The industry was hoping the Hon'ble Finance Minister would offer us some sector-specific reliefs which would help enterprises tide over the loss and look forward to reviving business in 2021.

## A BLEAK BUSINESS SCENARIO

As of now, the sector requires working capital which has been difficult to obtain. The industry faces a bleak business scenario for at least the next one year and is in need for interest waiver and if not, then the banks should be directed to charge interest on loans at fixed deposit rates plus two per cent capped at 9 per cent, at least for a year. From here, achieving even 25 per cent of pre-pandemic revenues in the near future seems very unlikely. Moreover, the Centre has slashed the budget allocation to the Ministry of Tourism by 19 per cent. This has come as a shock to the hospitality and tourism industry.

The industry has incurred the largest collateral damage of the COVID-19 pandemic and every small or big step to revive the sector will be crucial in the long-term health of both the sector and the country's economy.



**Sudesh Poddar**  
President, HRAEI

## A HUGE DISAPPOINTMENT

Lack of immediate direct support in the Union Budget has been a huge disappointment for the Indian hospitality, travel and tourism

“For revival support, the GST on tour operators should have been brought down to 1.8 per cent”

industry. The budget proposals for strengthening the country's infrastructure – rail, road, ports and so on – may boost the hospitality sector over the long-term but only once they are implemented. The industry was looking at support for immediate and short-term measures for critical revival. This has not happened in the budget announcements. We

had given a memorandum to the Finance Minister requesting for industry status to the hospitality sector, for classification of hospitality under the RBI infrastructure lending norm criteria, MAT waiver for a period of three years, and IGST billing to hotels for corporate and MICE bookings.

## CRITICAL MEASURES NOT ADDRESSED

For post-COVID revival it was important to bring down the 18% GST category for hotels to the category of 12% GST. There was a need for providing an option of GST at 12% to restaurants with full set offs. With a lot of state taxes on tourism, travel & hospitality at state level, subsuming of GST on fuel, interstate transportation taxes, power cess, liquor excise and property taxes, cess on parking charges needed to be made available as input tax costs. For revival support, the GST on tour operators should have been brought down 1.8% cent with full set offs. Hotels should have been enabled to levy IGST so as to give GST credits to Indian corporates who do interstate events and ensure domestic retention of Indian MICE, an utmost necessity post-COVID. Not addressing any of these critical measures in the budget has thrown the industry into a state of shock and deep dismay.





**K. Syama Raju**  
President, SIHRA

### INDUSTRY STATUS FOR CLASSIFIED HOTELS

Due to the consistent efforts of SIHRA, the government of Karnataka accepted to offer industry status to the classified hotels in Karnataka. Taking into account the long pending demand of the hotel industry in the state, Karnataka Cabinet has decided to grant industry status to the classified hotels.

### A TIMELY AND WELCOME MOVE

The tourism and hospitality industry of Karnataka has overwhelmingly welcomed the decision of the government. This decision will boost the recovery of the hospitality sector in the state as it will entitle the classified hotels to avail of industrial tariffs on electricity, property taxes, etc.

The tourism & hospitality sector has been one of the worst affected due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The government's decision to grant industry status to classified hotels / resorts in Karnataka is most timely and welcome as a large number of people working in star hotels lost their jobs during the lockdown and the pandemic.

'Industry' status will ensure many concessions for star hotels. Classified or star hotels

will have to pay water charges, electricity tariff, property tax, development tax, floor space index, and other charges, as per the industrial tariff, from April 1, 2021. Tax concessions will be provided to star hotels for a five-year period.

### BOOSTING REVIVAL OF THE SECTOR

Together with the Tourism Policy of Karnataka for 2020-25, which focuses on attracting



### Govt's decision to grant industry status to classified hotels is timely

investments by offering incentives and subsidies, the latest decision to offer industry status will help the revival of the sector in the state.

SIHRA is working very closely with the India Tourism Office to get the classification done at Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In Tamil Nadu, SIHRA followed up the FSSAI payment pending from the government and got approximately 110 crores released to hotels.

### WEBINARS ON MSME BENEFITS, NOT SCHEMES

SIHRA conducted a webinar on MSME benefits to hoteliers which was sponsored by India Tourism, Chennai.

The panellists included officials from MSME, National Institute of MSME, SIDBI, and SBI. SIHRA also arranged a webinar for its members to interact with the D Venkatesan, Regional Director South (Incharge), Ministry of Tourism to understand more about MOT schemes and classification of hotels.



**Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**  
President, HRANI

### INDUSTRY DID NOT FIND A MENTION IN THE BUDGET

The Indian hospitality, travel and tourism industry was expecting sector-specific relief measures in the Union Budget as it has been one of the most severely hit industries due to COVID-19 pandemic. The industry accounts for nearly 10 per cent of India's GDP and employs nearly 9 per cent of the country's working population. However, the government has totally ignored the industry as it did not find a mention in the budget.

### PRE-BUDGET MEMORANDUM IGNORED

Many presentations and recommendations have been submitted to the Finance Ministry by industry associations for the revival and survival of the hospitality and tourism industry. In the pre-budget memorandum to the Finance Minister, we included some priority reforms to stabilise the industry, such as industry status to the hospitality sector, classification of hospitality under the RBI infrastructure lending norm criteria, including hospitality and tourism in the concurrent list, MAT waiver for a period of three years, and IGST billing to hotels for corporate and

MICE bookings. However, our demands were not addressed in the Union Budget 2021.

### NO SHORT-TERM MEASURES FOR REVIVAL

Though the proposals for enhancing rail, road, ports, infrastructure & PPP in buses, airports and ports including vista coaches in tourism routes could boost the sector in the long-term. However, the tourism, travel & hospitality industry was looking at support for immediate and short-term measures for critical revival. This has not happened in the budget announcements.

The tourism, travel & hospitality industry is battling the worst in century crisis from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, revival from which will not be seen minimum for the next financial year till vaccination is fully undertaken with no observed side effects in all source and destination markets.

FAITH associations, including the FHRAI, had been vigorously interacting with all government stakeholders with the hope to immediately pull Indian tourism out of the COVID-19 recessionary conditions in the crisis of the century for



### The industry was looking at support for immediate and short-term measures

tourism, travel & hospitality. While infrastructure measures announced in the Union Budget 2021-22 may help revive the industry over the long-term, the opportunity for immediate support has regrettably been missed out.







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# Reforms to follow: Aaditya Thackeray

Now that Maharashtra has awarded its hospitality sector an industry status, its govt will soon roll out reforms for the sector, confirms Tourism Minister **Aaditya Thackeray**.



Hazel Jain



Aaditya Thackeray



**We intend to allow restos 24/7 operations in Mumbai**



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli



**Maha sets the benchmark for other states to follow**



**I**n an event held in Mumbai recently, the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Association of India (FHRAI) along with its western India regional association HRAWI felicitated State Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray for making Maharashtra the first and the only state to award its hospitality sector the industry status. Also present at the occasion were Valsa Nair, Principal Secretary, Tourism & Excise, Government of Maharashtra.

Effective April 1, 2021, Maharashtra's hospitality industry will be levied tariffs and duties on electricity, water, property, development and non-agricultural taxes at industrial rates.

**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI, said, "The biggest win for the sector was the government's announcement of according industry status to our sector which had remained a promise on paper for over 20 years. We thank our Tourism Minister for reduction of licenses from 70 to 10 and appreciate the government's efforts for tying up loose ends where required. With such progressive and industry-friendly policies, Maharashtra leads in tourism efforts and sets the benchmark for other states to follow."

**Aaditya Thackeray** also spoke about the reduction of licences and enabling ease of doing business in the

state. At the function, he said quite a few reforms will be rolled out soon. "Post COVID, Maharashtra government intends to allow restaurants 24/7 operations in Mumbai," announced the Minister. Referring to the Union Budget, he had earlier tweeted that there is nothing for tourism, "neither in the budget, nor in the ₹20 lakh crore package announced earlier".

"The then government of Maharashtra had issued a Government Resolution dated April 7, 1999 conferring tourism sector the 'Status of Industry' but it was never implemented. The HRAWI requested the state government to act on the long overdue resolution, especially in the post-COVID-19 period and the government obliged," said **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI.

"Last year, the Maharashtra government brought down the number of licenses from 70 to 10 and, 70 separate application forms were reduced to just eight. Recently, the government also agreed to waive off the excise license fee on pro-rata basis along with the roll-back of the 15 per cent annual fee increase for the year 2020. The new policy also replaced the need for obtaining NOCs from various departments with self-certification by establishments," concluded **Pradeep Shetty**, Sr. Vice President, HRAWI & Jt. Hon Secretary, FHRAI.





## REACTIONS TO THE INDUSTRY STATUS

### Pushpendra Bansal, COO, Lords Hotels & Resorts

The industry status approval is a landmark moment for hotel industry. It will let hotels avail benefits including rebates in electricity charges as well as water and property taxes. It will also give our brand the encouragement to further expand in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. We hope other states also accord this prestigious industry status. I didn't find any disadvantage in it since it's a big relief for our sector and has come at a time when hotel and restaurant businesses have been severely hit because of the pandemic.

### Manav Thadani, Founder Chairman, Hotelivate

My view is that every policy has something in it that is discomforting to a few and therefore it's difficult to get everyone on board. Overall however we need other states to emulate Maharashtra.

### Nandivardhan Jain, Founder & CEO, Noesis Capital Advisors

The industry status will help hotels lower their operating costs like electricity, water, and taxes as right now commercial rates are applicable. The government did not provide any relief to hotel owners and operators throughout the pandemic. However, the availability of

finance and the increased gestation period is still not considered for the industry. The industry needs finance available at a lower rate of interest with a longer gestation period. Hotel assets being capital-intensive, the loan tenure required is around 15-20 years which currently is between 8-10 years making investments in the asset class restricted to only limited people and a high proportion of equity needs to be infused in the project to make it viable.

### Satyen Jain, CEO, Pride Group of Hotels

We have asked for the industry and infrastructure status as hospitality is a capital-intensive industry, and it cannot survive on a high rate of interest. With this status, the hospitality sector will be entitled to receive several benefits and concessions, including longer loan repayment tenure and lower borrowing rates, which will help in attracting substantial fresh investments and will go a long way in improving the health of the sector.

### Sandeep Talaulicar, Managing Director, Jakson Hospitality

We will avail of four big cost advantages with this. The biggest benefit will be in electricity tariff. At present, there are three categories of electricity tariffs in Maharashtra. Domestic BEST tariff (₹3.05 to ₹3.30), commercial MSEDCL (₹23) and industrial MSEDCL (₹15). Hotels currently pay commercial tariffs which are the highest. If tourism is given the status of an industry, then hotels, lodges, resorts and other tourism infrastructure will be eligible for the industrial rates that will affect us positively on our current cost of doing business. We will be also covered under the industrial rate category for water consumption by the CGWA (Commercial Ground Water Authority). It will also have a positive impact on property taxes. Lastly, after giving industry status to tourism, it will become applicable to all hotels and resorts across the state and tourism on the whole will benefit from the MSME policy. We will also avail of other MSME subsidies in the policy. Unfortunately entrepreneurs in the sector will not get any added benefits like subsidies on land acquisition or bank loans.



Nandivardhan Jain

**The industry needs finance at a lower rate of interest**



Sandeep Talaulicar

**The biggest benefit will be in electricity tariff**





Neha Rawat

# Given the short shrift

FHRAI EC members express their disappointment with the budget and share how their business is going to be affected by the negligence shown to the tourism and hospitality sector.



Neha Rawat





## **Param Kannampilly Chairman & Managing Director Concept Hospitality**



**Param Kannampilly**

This was the first budget after the pandemic and almost all the industries were expecting some relief from it. The hospitality industry was also hoping that certain concessions would be given to it. Everyone knew that the industry was the hardest hit and each and every hotel, be it a part of an international chain or a standalone hotel was struggling to survive. In the light of the above fact, the hoteliers were eagerly awaiting certain measures which would boost the industry. Sadly, it didn't happen and like previous years, the Finance Minister didn't provide any benefits to the industry this year as well. However, as someone who has been part of the industry for more than four decades, I didn't have high hopes from the budget.

As far as The Fern Hotels & Resorts are concerned, we are fortunate to be present across the country. Moreover, we are blessed to have hotels catering to all the segments. We have business hotels, properties at beach and hill destinations, forest resorts, religious places, historical cities etc. This diversity in our portfolio has been our greatest asset in these challenging times. So, if our business hotels are not doing so well due to obvious reasons, we also have our economy brand which is of great help. Once the restrictions were eased gradually, our resorts and leisure destinations started receiving occupancies as well.

Another factor which has helped us is the number of keys per hotel. On an average most of our properties are having 50 to 70 keys. This has saved us a lot of headache. It is no brain juggler that it is so much easier to sell a 50-room hotel as compared to say 100 or 150 rooms. Due to this factor, our occupancies have been on the higher side.

We have a strong sales and marketing force having multiple regional offices. We also have a dedicated team to take care of online bookings. Our websites are dynamic, vibrant and customer friendly. We have also launched a lot of packages across all our properties. These have fetched decent results. We are also doing a lot of tie-ups to provide benefits to the customers. We just partnered with Singapore Airlines. There are certain other things which are in the pipeline. The worst is over for the industry and things are only going to improve from here. I am confident that the entire Fern family will emerge triumphant.



**Like previous years, the FM didn't  
provide any benefits to industry**







**Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar**

## **Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar** Executive Director, HRH Group of Hotels

Budget 2021 lacks support for the hospitality industry, including hotels and tourism – among the hardest hit sectors during the pandemic, with its lockdowns and travel restrictions.

Those in the hotel and tourism industries are unhappy about being sidelined in the budget as far as incentives and relief measures are concerned.

Budget 2021 cut funds to the Tourism Ministry by \$65 million (from ₹2,500 crore to ₹2,026.77 crore) from the previous budget year. The budget has, however, allocated \$150 million (₹1,088.03 crore) for development of tourism infrastructure and \$91.5 million (₹668.72 crore) for promotion and publicity.

We have great respect for the Ministry of Finance and its Hon'ble Union Minister and officials who framed the budget. It would be only right for us to understand the challenges which the country faces. It's a given that huge expenditure is being incurred on fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, and the government has to bear the expenses.

Quite clearly, tourism and related industries are not the first priority, as we have witnessed in the Union Budget 2021. The challenge therefore is for us to work together, prepare joint plans and move towards creating task groups that can address tourism-related problems.

'Atmanirbhar Bharat' is the vision of our Hon'ble Prime Minister; Narendra Modi. We should strive to become 'atmanirbhar' in our areas of work, influence, cities and communities. We have to independently and collectively solve our own problems, find solutions which are sustainable and equitable. Now is the time... let us do it!

I make the appeal to the big brands in the tourism industry, the doyens who have been guiding and setting the trends for our industry over the last four decades. Please take the lead and demonstrate leadership in these pandemic times for the entire industry.

I look ahead optimistically and with hope for a better and 'atmanirbhar' future, with more Indians smiling confidently.

I am a firm believer of the fact that the resilience of the Indian businessman cannot be undermined. I am certain that we would find a way through.



**We have to find solutions which are sustainable**





## Vineet Taing President, Vatika Hotels

The tourism industry was expecting a lot more from the budget presented by our Hon'ble Finance Minister, especially when the entire industry is going through a crisis due to the pandemic. The budget failed to address various long-pending demands.

Also, the budget lacked any new direction for the industry at this juncture when India's foreign tourist arrivals are at an all-time low.

According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), India's hospitality, travel and tourism industry accounts for roughly 10% of the GDP. Going by the size, the hospitality industry is the biggest employment generator of both direct and indirect jobs. The industry had supported 87.5 million jobs which is close to 12.75% of total employment generated in the country till the year 2018-19.

The entire hospitality industry has been demanding infrastructure status since a long time, especially for

allocated and used puts the entire industry in a fix. The increase in the number of trains such as Tejas and many others which would be connecting iconic destinations would certainly give a boost to travel. The promise to add 100 airports is also going to encourage the industry, but all these are years away.

FHRAI had pushed a lot of recommendations and is continuously following-up with the Ministry to revive the tourism and hospitality industry. The key recommendations are extension of term loan repayment by five more years, a reversal of GST input, reduction of fixed charges in the electricity bills, a rebate of trade licence fee by 50%, and a waiver of liquor fee for hotels and restaurants.



**Vineet Taing**



**The industry was expecting a lot for  
tourism and hospitality**



hotel projects of more than ₹50 crores. However, there was no support for the demand this year too. Taking heed from NITI Aayog's New India @75 plan the industry was expecting a lot for tourism and hospitality.

While the budget allocation of INR 2,500 crore for the tourism sector sounds positive, the lack of sufficient information as to how these funds are

In the current scenario, there has been a decrease in international inbound travel which plays a key role in generating sustainability and profitability of city hotels.

This year shall be challenging from the sustenance and employment generation perspective. With no support from the government, we look forward to a new strategy on debts and their servicing besides aiming at new and innovative revenue generation sources.



# F&B INDUSTRY

## The ground reality



At India Tourism Mart (ITM) 2021, held from February 18-20, FHRAI conducted a virtual session on 'Indian Cuisine - The Emerging Balance of Power & Taste'.



Neha Rawat





HRAI's virtual session was moderated by Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, FHRAI, while the panellists were Chef Ranveer Brar, Celebrity Chef & Restaurateur; Kamlesh Barot, Director, Vie Hospitality and Past-President FHRAI; Ankit Chona, Managing Director, HRPL Restaurants; and Deepa Suhas Awchat, CEO, Goa Portuguesa.

Commencing the session, **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, said, "We hear a lot about revival these days and many statistics say that 40-50 per cent revival has come through. But what is the ground reality?"

**Kamlesh Barot**, Director, Vie Hospitality and Past President FHRAI, responded, "Recent data published by HVS ANAROCK states that in 2020 the loss to the sector is an estimated 89,818cr against an estimated revenue of 1,58,000cr in 2019, so you can well imagine the gravity of the situation. The ground reality is that approximately 60-70 per cent revenue is getting knocked off from hotels and restaurants."

**Ankit Chona**, Managing Director, HRPL Restaurants, shared, "For our restaurants, January was surprisingly a decent month as sales were up. We run about 60 restos in Gujarat, Telangana and Maharashtra. The ground reality is that earlier we had 70 restos, but we had to shut 10 of them as we incurred substantial losses. We still are not in a fully functional mode for doing business. However, January and February have given us some hope."

Kohli queried, "What about fine dining, especially in tier-2 and 3 cities?"

Celebrity Chef & Restaurateur **Ranveer Brar** responded, "I think to answer the question we need to look at recuperation across the board and across the strata of dining and across different tiers of cities. I think the way we look at our business has changed. Casual spaces is where we will see future trends among other things. The delivery system is going to cover up for the lack of growth in fine dining. Tier-2 and tier-3 cities are going to cover for tier-1 cities because that's where people are going global now."

Kohli quipped, "Is government doing enough to support our industry?"

Chona replied, "We need some acknowledgment from the government as we were no less than frontline workers when it came

to supplying food 24/7. We urge the govt not to put curfews after 9 pm in places where we have a majority of our restos & allow us to put our tables outside just for this year. We tried to work this out with authorities, but to no avail. We are okay with the GST but we need some input credit as it has become unviable to reopen restos."

Barot added, "We are not expecting a huge stimulus from the govt, we just want that survival measures are looked into. We should be given priority when it comes to according industry status to hospitality."

Kohli queried, "What should be the steps taken by India to enhance its global branding in cuisine tourism which can create a new segment in tourism competitiveness?"

**Deepa Suhas Awchat**, CEO, Goa Portuguesa, replied, "We are always trying to bust the myth that Indian cuisine is not just about some regional cuisines. Punjabi and Mughlai cuisines are popular as they have been well promoted. I feel we need to focus on authentic regional cuisines offered by our innumerable states. We should educate foreigners and entrepreneurs via videos and social media platforms. Though millennials tend to be attracted to the foreign brands, we could dish up regional cuisines in innovative ways to satiate their taste buds. We have to reinvent and popularise regional cuisines and the government needs to take the initiative and promote such cuisines in every state."

Brar added, "The reason we are lagging behind other cuisine food is that we don't take pride in our food. We need to be unabashedly proud and loud while displaying our food to the world. We need to find a coherent message, there is so much which is working in the silos. We need to create a cultural story around our cuisines and then showcase our culture cuisine. Stories attract emotions and emotions draw tourists to certain places. How we package our food and how we present our food is important."

Kohli queried, "How does the Indian restaurant and F&B service infrastructure in India compare with those in other countries, especially in terms of food products, experiences, safety standards and skills.?"

Barot stated, "Setting up a restaurant out of India is different right from hiring to hygiene protocols. There is a huge difference between what is taught in the catering colleges and what is followed in the Indian restaurant industry. When chefs go out of India,



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**

“**Food service aggregators can't survive without restaurants**”



**Kamlesh Barot**

“**Hotels & restaurants are incurring 60-70% revenue loss**”



**Ankit Chona**

“**We had to shut 10 of our restos as we incurred substantial losses**”





**Ranveer Brar**

“  
**In our business,  
food safety is  
of prime  
importance**  
”

they must showcase their regional cuisines instead of French, Continental or other cuisines as that is what they will be recognised for. It makes more sense to focus on niche cuisines.”

Brar added, “New processes and hygiene have been realigned in this post-pandemic era. In our business, food safety is of prime importance. There are parameters and benchmarks one has to follow. We were not trained to tackle air-borne diseases like COVID, but we always had processes. Regulatory bodies need to create parameters beyond safety for restaurants.”

Chona opined, “Government should support Michelin restaurants near iconic historical monuments like Taj, India Gate, to name a few. Destinations offering tourist attractions along with good food are sought-after.

conventional old school restaurateur to understand the importance of ordering on the online platform. However, things are moving in the right direction.”

Chona added, “Nowadays families they don’t get time to cook so they order. Earlier the rate of takeaways was less but now online orders have become more frequent. FSAs are important because we are accessible to different brands through them and they cater to a different class of people. However, people like to frequent restaurants as they offer a dine-in experience. So the restaurants will survive and they will also go hand-in-hand with FSAs. Due to the pandemic, people who were not tech savvy have learned to order online and the ones who were very fond of dine-in experiences have started ordering from home. So in an ideal scenario, post the pandemic, people will continue going out but will also order food online. Talking of balance,



**Deepa Suhas Awchat**

“  
**We have to  
reinvent and  
popularise  
regional cuisines**  
”

However, adapting to the new normal will also take some time and we need to train staff to take the hygiene standard up a notch. The culture of health and fitness is something that has arrived.”

On the growth of food service aggregators (FSAs), especially during the lockdown, Kohli commented, “Food was always about the cuisine and the dining out experience. Has that changed irrevocably to just cuisine and dining in due to FSAs? Food choices are increasing but survival of food businesses is becoming more difficult. How will the power of balance emerge post the pandemic between the aggregators and restaurant owners?”

Brar responded, “Currently restos are feeling the pinch but this is the time when they will realise the importance of aggregators. It would have taken a long time for the

the restaurateur is the one who is suffering the most.” Barot pointed out, “We can’t take away the eating out experience coupled with service in our industry. As for FSAs, they are an integral part of an industry worth 10 bn US dollars. If you look at the Indian food gallery market, it is growing by 9.5 per cent. We are looking at 6-7 per cent of order size being taken away. Today FSAs are taking away our customers and arm-twisting our industry by making us offer discounts. FHRAI has been requesting the competition commission to regulate these FSAs to save what is left of the restaurant industry post-pandemic taking 20-30 per cent of our margin.”

Kohli concluded, “Both the restaurants and aggregators have to come to a mutual understanding that restaurants can survive without aggregators, but aggregators can’t survive without us.”



# A steady recovery

With domestic travel picking pace, hotels are seeing new travel trends. GMs of prominent ibis properties in Bengaluru, Goa, New Delhi and Mumbai share hospitality trends.

 Manas Diwedi

**Irfan Khatri**  
General Manager  
ibis Bengaluru City Center  
& ibis Bengaluru  
Hosur Road



The year gone by taught us many things that we tended to overlook in the past. We are in a digital era with larger connectivity with our target audience and we are exploring new ways to advocate our brand. The hospitality industry took a steep turn but for a better future. Staycations have become increasingly popular in Bangalore combined with minimal travel, low holiday planning time, cost, and carbon footprint. Staycations are perfect for travellers of all generations. ibis hotels are heading to a gradual & steady recovery. After the shaky period, all our ibis & ibis Style hotels across the country are open for business & we are happy that we are seeing steady growth in the key markets.

**Kedar Dighe**  
General Manager  
ibis Styles Goa Calangute



With reduced travel restriction across our state borders, Goa has responded well by reinstating faith in travel and adventure. The year-end witnessed healthy demand pushing occupancies with branded hotels, and safety still remains priority for our patrons. With new trends emerging and change in source markets, it is imperative that we remain agile and innovative to adapt. While the sun and sand are enticing domestic travellers, our ALLSAFE label in partnership with Bureau Veritas assures our patrons, partners and associates that their well-being is our priority.

**Anant Leekha**  
General Manager  
ibis New Delhi Aerocity



Owing to the pandemic, there is a major shift of paradigm in the way we do business. We need to ensure to win the confidence of travellers to stay at hotels. At Accor, ALLSAFE protocols are the key driving factors to ensure our hotels are ready to welcome our esteemed guests. The recovery mostly is dependent on staycation offerings that targets domestic travel and SMEs have also started to travel which is a healthy sign for the industry. F&B will also play a major part in this recovery stage. At ibis New Delhi Aerocity we have focused largely on intimate weddings at our poolside location along with delivering 'Good Mood Food' from our restaurant, Spice it, through food delivery aggregators.

**Gaurav Chavan**  
General Manager  
ibis Mumbai Airport



With the widespread effect of the pandemic on the hospitality sector, we have had to deal with uncharted challenges. Now, with light at the end of the tunnel, we can see a slow upward trajectory in occupancies across segments with the ease in travel restrictions and an overall positive sentiment. The Mumbai market is a hub for business transient and leisure travellers. The market remains heavily dependent on both domestic & international travellers & while international travel is still restricted, the market has been supported generously by domestic travellers. We are hopeful that the market buoyancy may return to its former glory towards the end of 2021.

# One-stop SOLUTION

Hoteliers opine that guests will prefer a one-stop solution to their event needs.



Neha Rawat



Shruti Shibulal

**Shruti Shibulal**  
CEO & Director, Tamara Leisure Experiences

## WEDDING INDUSTRY HAS IMMENSE POTENTIAL

Based on our experience thus far, it seems likely that pre-COVID-19 levels of business in the MICE space is unlikely to resume in 2021. Corporates have displayed frugality spending and found alternatives to live events, exhibitions, and conferences to a great extent. It will be a while before we start hosting such events again.

However, we have observed that the wedding industry is one with great potential for business. Our properties have already witnessed some spectacular special events, as families save for many years to celebrate weddings. Under the current government regulations of small gatherings, we have observed that the willingness to explore destination weddings and high-end, exclusive properties has grown. Our predominant strategy at the moment is to focus on weddings, providing customisable, end-to-end

“  
**Our predominant strategy is to focus on weddings, providing customisable, experiences**”

experiences for our guests, offering them the best events they could hope for, while at the same time keeping the safety and health of our guests and staff as a top priority.

## ONE-STOP SHOP FOR WEDDING EVENTS

Our main focus has always been on providing our guests and clients the best of experiences. As we now focus more on weddings and events, we hope to be a one-stop shop, providing all that is required, from beginning to end, for a successful and memorable wedding event. Starting with coordination with vendors, to providing customised seating, spaces and menus, music, décor, and live streaming facilities, we do all we can to ensure our guests begin a new chapter of their lives as beautifully as possible. The Tamara Coorg and The Tamara Kodai, specifically, as luxury nature resorts are now also open to provide a wedding party with a booking of the entire resort for a multi-day event, should they be so inclined. This offers the opportunity to plan a truly unique experience for the families and friends coming together to celebrate in a way that is special, curated specifically to each couple's desires, and private and safe at a time when that is most important.







## Satyen Jain CEO, Pride Group of Hotels

### OFFERING NEW EXPERIENCES, CYCLICAL EVENTS

With over 20 great locations around India, Pride Group of Hotels boasts more than 72 banquets, manicured lawns, business centres and conference halls with a wide range of offerings from weddings to social engagements to conferences and meetings. Our presence in multiple geographies mainly in Delhi, Pune, Gujarat, Bangalore and Chennai allows us to offer new experiences and retain cyclical events within our portfolio.

On the service front, we have intricately designed F&B options that cater specifically to MICE. Meeting technology is another area we will continue to invest in. We have some of the most advanced conferencing facilities and equipment in our hotels. As we are witnessing a rise in demand across India at present, we have expanded our portfolio further with sign up of new soon-to-launch properties in Rajkot, Bharuch, Surendranagar and Agra.

### MICE INDUSTRY GAINING MOMENTUM.

At Pride Hotels we understand that every event whether personal or professional has different needs and hence we offer the flexibility of space to cater for these events. From romantic venues for destination weddings to special functions and theme events to professional venues for a day conference, product launches, board meetings, training or an investment seminar, take your pick and leave the rest to us. We've specialised menus designed as per communities which approach us. Each one of them have various

emotional requirements as per functions and customs. As the vaccination programme in our country gains ground, business tourism and MICE industry have also started gaining momentum. At Pride Hotels, we are extending a warm welcome to all our guests who want to host their next event; whether it is a wedding, corporate function, exhibition or any social gathering. All of the events are supervised by an experienced team of field professionals. Depending on the nature of the events, we design the itinerary, starting from welcoming guests to catering services. We provide personalised event services which include live streaming services, specialised decor options and financial assistance if needed. We give priority to the needs of every individual, so they don't miss out on their experience.

### MICE EVENTS IN THE NEW NORMAL

We have restarted our operations by adopting measures for a safe and hygienic experience under 'Pride Safety Assurance' initiative. For the wedding events we are offering multiple customised/personalised packages, while hygiene and safety protocols are strictly followed. We have also initiated unique offers like online menu, live streaming of the events and catering services for events, parties or gatherings with enhanced safety norms.



Satyen Jain



**We have designed F&B options that  
cater specifically to MICE**





**Rohit Chopra**

## **Rohit Chopra**

**Regional Director – Sales & Distribution, Accor India & South Asia**

### **TRUST IS THE NEW CURRENCY**

The focus in 2021 will remain hygiene & safety assurance with contactless experiences in conducting events. Trust is the new currency, and our endeavour is to continue winning our guest's confidence. We are experiencing movement in a few industries such as pharmaceuticals, electronics, automobile, sports, movie production houses and social events and can expect them to drive more MICE demand in 2021. We have confirmed few MICE

business for coming months as per the local government norms. We are confident that companies would prefer in-person and socially distant meetings and discussions for business transactions rather than conducting events virtually. To encourage demand, one of the key factors in 2021 will be flexibility on commercial terms & conditions, given that these are unique times. Moreover, as international travel restrictions continue, domestic business will be driving MICE revenues.



### **USP AS A MICE/WEDDING HOTEL CHAIN**

Accor offers a choice of nearly 14,000 meeting rooms in more than 2,400 hotels, from luxury to economy, in 95 countries. Our various brands have modular meeting spaces equipped with the latest-generation equipment and state-of-the-art technology. Catering services are tailored to your needs (buffet, meal trays, drinks receptions, sit-down dinners), themes (international, regional, local), and to participants' dietary requirements.

### **LURING MICE SEGMENT PATRONS.**

We have undertaken multiple initiatives both operationally and commercially to bring back MICE segment patrons. From a safety perspective, besides the ALLSAFE Label, at every Accor property, we have altered our meeting room capacity and re-arranged the furniture to ensure minimum one metre distance between each participant to be compliant with government norms. Our hotels have also organised a circulation path (one-way traffic) to access and exit the meeting rooms.

Some of our hotels, such as the Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity complex, are also enabled with all the technological set up to be ready to host events in a hybrid format – physical and virtual. Accor is currently running ALL Meeting Planner – Double Your Points, a global offer till July 2021. Our Meeting Planner members are eligible to earn double points when they register, book, hold and pay for events at a participating hotel. Additionally, in India under the campaign, meeting planners could book business groups up to 50 rooms at any of India & South Asia hotels and cancel or postpone up to seven days of arrival without any penalty.

### **CONTEMPORARY VIRTUAL WEDDINGS**

For weddings, Accor has rolled out a brand-new initiative called Vivaah at Novotel which is conceptualised for the contemporary virtual weddings and extends a hybrid approach, it offers an array of customised and flexible packages for our patrons. With Vivaah at Novotel, guests get to select a host hotel in any city as their wedding venue. To bring the couple's dear ones closer to them on their wedding, the host hotel extends the web telecast of the wedding to their relatives and friends present in different cities.



**Our Meeting Planner members are eligible to earn double points**





## **Mehul Sharma** **Founder & CEO, Signum Hotels & Resorts**

### **DEVELOPING HOTELS THAT CAN ACCOMMODATE MICE FOR A CAPACITY OF 150-200 PAX**

Signum Hotels is currently on an expansion mode and we are consciously expanding across destinations that would be of interest to the MICE segment. Internationally we are looking at expanding across the US, Serbia, Russia, while on the domestic front, destinations like Bengaluru, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Goa are on our radar.

We are essentially looking at developing hotels that can accommodate MICE for a capacity of 150-200 pax as we feel mid-sized events would be the way forward in this new normal world. Even mid-sized weddings and social gatherings are a key area of business for our hotels in the year 2021.

### **CUSTOMISED EXPERIENTIAL STAYS**

At Signum Hotels, we offer one-stop solution to guests looking for MICE and/or wedding facilities. We also offer the option to book our banquets online through the website. Guests can explore destinations, banquet options, floor plans, seating style, menu selection and more, all this is further supported with a chat bot.

All the queries are re-directed from the website to the respective hotel, making the entire process seamless and more efficient. This technology enhancement is a result of the current pandemic as everyone has embraced online like never before. Our tech advancements further strengthen our vision to offer customised experiential stays to our guests right from the time of reservations to the end user experience.

### **GUEST AND STAFF SAFETY A PRIORITY**

We have re-invented the complete wheel considering the pandemic has had a major impact on every aspect of hospitality business.

The profitability is reduced, rates have been drastically slashed, however, we are not compromising with the guest experience and service levels.

It's now all about personalisation, educating our customers, localisation in sourcing etc. to reduce costs, while integrating the best of technology.

Guest and staff safety remain at the heart of all operations at Signum Hotels with strict adherence to all health and hygiene protocols.

### **PREPARED TO CONDUCT MICE EVENTS IN THE NEW NORMAL**

Signum Hotels are fully prepared to conduct MICE events in the new normal. We have taken all necessary steps and follow the defined event protocols.

The hotel teams are fully trained. There is a strong involvement of the corporate office along with key executives at the hotels like the chefs to ensure SOPs are being followed at each level.

We also have hygiene managers who conduct frequent audits and quality checks at the hotels. General managers are closely involved in each event taking place



**Mehul Sharma**



## **Mid-sized weddings & social gatherings are a key area of business**

at the hotel with detailed guidelines being shared with event planners to ensure a worry-free event execution.

So far we have been extremely successful in organising events at our hotels and we are prepared to take this to the next level in 2021.

### **AN UPSWING IN EVENT BUSINESS.**

Shorter duration intimate events and weddings will trend in 2021. People are spending money, yet with caution.

The good part is that we are seeing an upswing in event business. Now it's all about quality over quantity and the focus will remain this way.

Customised experiences that offer value for money will see rising demand. Guests will prefer hotels that offer a comprehensive package and one-stop solution to all their event needs.



**Davinder Juj**

## **Davinder Juj** **General Manager, Eros Hotel New Delhi Nehru Place**

### **MAJOR FOCUS ON ATTRACTING M!CE EVENTS**

M!CE business has a valuable and almost 40 per cent contribution in overall business of the hotel. Considering 2021 as the recovery year, we will majorly focus on attracting M!CE events by adopting new virtual set ups and smart technology, finding ways to bring old clients back, exploring ways to partner with new clients, tie up with event planners and digital platforms to market the hotel as an ideal destination for M!CE.

### **HOSTING SOCIAL AND CORPORATE GATHERINGS**

With 25,000 sq ft banqueting area with ample venue options to choose from, Eros Hotel New Delhi Nehru Place stands as a preferred M!CE destination which can accommodate approximately 2,000 people. Apart from

name of which we implemented a comprehensive outline of safety measures such as screening of guests and team members at the hotel entrance, highest level of cleaning and sanitisation practices, strict protocols for holding events and conferences, new capacity charts ensuring safe distancing, safety signage in halls and rooms for awareness, enhanced and safe food and beverage serving practices, interactive technology usage in halls, touchless soap dispensers, sensor taps and automatic sanitisers to avoid contact, PPE in all relevant areas, markings and queue manager placements, digital/contactless payments and trainings and mock drills for team members to prepare them for any emergency situations. All these measures are in line with the guidelines issued by the WHO, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).



various indoor and outdoor choices, we also have two spacious boardrooms to conduct meetings with small gatherings. The hotel has a large pre-function area and a terrace attached to the Royal Ballroom which can host exclusive social and corporate gatherings amidst lush green surroundings. It also offers 9-hole Putting Green which makes it the only hotel in South Delhi with this exclusive facility for golf lovers. It has a shopping arcade which is an added attraction for in-house guests. Apart from that, guests are assured with contactless services to experience a safe and comfortable stay.

### **COMPREHENSIVE SAFETY MEASURES**

We emphasise on creating a valuable experience for our guests, rather than just a stay. To enhance this experience, we have introduced #EROSCARE initiative under the

### **EXCLUSIVE PACKAGES FOR BANQUETS**

Eros Hotel New Delhi Nehru Place is one of the best hotels to host weddings and M!CE events in the city that offers great hospitality, the finest catering and elegant décor. Its multi-purpose venues with natural light are best suited for all kinds of events like pre-wedding functions, corporate meetings, M!CE events and training sessions. To attract more weddings and pre-wedding functions, we are offering exclusive packages along with complimentary room with special amenities for the bride and groom.

To get maximum M!CE events, we have exclusive packages for banquets with audio visuals and the other package includes room & banquets with attractive service. When it comes to food, our chefs always strive for innovation, hygiene and perfection such as flexible themed tea/coffee breaks, lunch and dinner with a variety of innovative cocktails and mocktails. We also offer menus for occasions along with friendly efficient service, dedicated IT support, highly trained and skilled team to provide personalised service.



**M!CE has almost 40% contribution in  
overall business of the hotel**







# Tent City 1 beckons

Tent City 1 is basking in the glory of the buzz created by the Statue of Unity close by. **Bhavik Sheth**, Finance & Operation Manager, Lallooji & Sons, discusses their plans.



Hazel Jain

## What is the kind of occupancy you are seeing since Gujarat reopened borders?

As the borders have opened up and there are no requirements for COVID negative tests on entering the state, the occupancy is improving. The efforts of Gujarat Tourism to promote destinations in the state and encouraging people of Gujarat to travel within the state for staycations are also commendable. Our occupancy has improved since January 2021 and a majority of our guests are residents of Gujarat itself. In view of the COVID-19 situation, adequate measures have also been put in place at the Tent City.

## What is your distribution channel?

We are promoting through the OTAs as well travel agents for the distribution of the property. We have a travel agent base of more than 10,000. We send them regular emails, conduct zoom meetings to promote our properties, call them at regular intervals, provide all the assistance with respect to content creation and promotion, give them credit period so that they can rotate the money, and even offer convenience to cancel or date modification in case of guest emergency.

## How many nights do visitors usually stay?

Usually guests stay for three nights. We have recently launched a three-night package and it is getting good response. Tourists can make this destination a multiple-day stay with many attractions opening up nearby. We are the only property in the entire vicinity which is providing a single-window clearance with respect to food, accommodation, sightseeing including tickets and transportation with local guide. There are many attractions in the entire Kevadia region. It is almost impossible to cover it within two days.



## ABOUT TENT CITY 1

It has 60 luxurious cottages each of them equipped with modern amenities under four categories. It also has a dining hall, multipurpose hall, swimming pool and river-facing cottages. Opened in 2018, Tent City 1 is located about 7 kilometres from the Statue of Unity.



Bhavik Sheth

## Do you plan to expand in this year or 2022?

Right now, apart from Kevadia we have our presence in Rann of Kutch with 350 tents. and Odisha with four locations and having approximately 50 tents at each site. In Odisha, we are operating the popular eco-retreat tent city at Konark, Daringbadi, Satkosia and Hirakud. We are also seeing expansion opportunities in other states.



**We have launched a 3-night package & it's getting good response**



# Optimal performance

One must learn from marketing insights and performance and adjust strategy to growing travel demand, says **Dheeraj Kukreja**, COO, Piccadily Holiday Resorts.

**I**n our rapidly evolving world, one of the most important changes our era has witnessed is digitisation. Digital innovations and technological development have made an impact everywhere, especially in the fields of manufacturing and service. Hospitality and tourism cater to a wide range of services and products, and the benefits of digital revolution have had quite an impact on this sector. The widespread adoption of new technologies in this industry in the recent years, and especially last year, have fundamentally reshaped the means in which services are provided and received.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath has exerted a tremendous impact on the hospitality and tourism industry worldwide. Lockdowns, travel restrictions and closures of transportation led to a 22 per cent decline of international tourist arrivals in the first quarter of 2020 and over 60 per cent decline over the entire year. The pandemic led to hotel occupancies dropping to zero.

It was predicted that the travel recovery would be worse than 9/11, going beyond a three-year recovery plan to about five years; but the industry has picked up rather well and is on its way to total recovery starting with QSR, resorts and other



Dheeraj Kukreja

“  
**Ramp up marketing efforts focused on brand awareness and fueling new guests into the booking funnel**  
”

segments of business. The hospitality industry has been opting for technological improvements. Global hotel chains were of course in a fight for survival but with continuous improvement in communications and information technology, they have been able to optimise their performance and reduce safety risks. Along the same lines, hoteliers should continue do their best to forecast different scenarios, take the necessary steps to adequately prepare for recovery, and set proper expectations and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

In the current scenario, hoteliers can adopt the following three-phased approach for revival.

- **While travel is on pause:** While people are not travelling and many hotels are closed, hotels should stay connected with their current and potential guests through social media, emails, and editorial content that entertains and adds value so as to maintain a strong brand relationship.
- **Initial rise in travel demand:** Ramp up marketing efforts focused on brand awareness and fueling new guests into the booking funnel with affordable CPCs and CPMs to reach people beginning to daydream about rebooking and planning vacations. This ensures a flexible cancellation policy and sensitive messaging relevant to the situation.
- **Travel demand strengthens:** Continue marketing efforts, shifting focus to lower-funnel intent as well as targeting the right demographics and feeder markets with the right messaging and packages. One must learn from marketing insights and performance and adjust strategy to growing travel demand and seasonality as travel begins to stabilise.

It cannot be said enough that the world is a dynamic place and to adapt to the hurdles of continuous change through creative thinking and unique ideas is the way forward, not just for the hotel and tourism industry but all sectors.

(The article has been written by Dheeraj Kukreja, COO, Piccadily Holiday Resorts. The views expressed are the author's own views)





# ‘Connect with local culture’

Firdaus by Citrus County in Punjab, spread across 20 acres and curated as an outdoor and active farm stay, has become the latest member of the RARE India Community.



Shoba Mohan

**F**irdaus by Citrus County has now become a member of the RARE India Community, which consists of some of the finest hand-picked conscious luxury boutique hotels, palace stays, wildlife lodges, homestays and retreats of the sub-continent.

One of the first few pet-friendly places within driving distance from Delhi, Chandigarh and Amritsar with an airport at Adampur within an hour's drive, Firdaus is set in 20 acres. Curated as an outdoor and active farm stay, it is a working farm with poplar, kinnow, orange and grape fruit trees. Four villas are spread out with plenty of open spaces that encourage guests to stay out as much as possible. Popular among children, Firdaus encourages children to 'be a farmer for a

weekend' where children are given duties and towards the end of the session discuss challenges, insights and ideas about farming. Firdaus is also perfect for stargazing and can be the base to experience the Holla Mohalla festival of the Anantpur Sahib. Harkirat Singh, the owner is an avid rider and hence Firdaus is also a paradise for bikers. It is popular for activities like forest trails and four wheel drive outs.

**Shoba Mohan**, Founder, RARE India, said, "One of our initiatives is to show children and young adults' life on a farm and the richness of this culture, the joy of farm fresh food and being outdoors. Firdaus is a perfect example of a getaway that is fun, learning and time together for families while connecting them with local culture and community."

“  
One of our  
initiatives is to  
show children  
and young  
adults' life on  
a farm”

## Laurels for Sheraton Indore

Sheraton Grand Palace  
Indore has bagged the Red  
Achievers Award 2021



Sheraton Grand Palace Indore received the Red Achievers Award for the first time after opening, for 'Luxury and Grand 5-star Property' from Red FM 93.5 Indore. This recognition was bestowed after reviewing guest's reviews, recommendations and contribution towards the society during the pandemic:



## Inhabit unveils statement chairs

◆ Neeta Kumar, furniture and interior designer, and founder of Inhabit, has unveiled a range of arresting statement chairs. Crafted with high-end materials and exhibiting innovative design, every piece is meticulously created. The timeless statement chairs have strong silhouettes and colourful tones, showcasing the brand's trademark high quality carpentry and upholstery. The furniture is effortlessly magnificent, displays refinement and is chic and eye-catching. Additionally, the chairs exhibit one-of-a-kind forms, flawless workmanship and a vibrant colour palette. They have an exquisite design aesthetic, while still being functional.



## Plüsch unveils furniture by COR

◆ The Alvo Barstool, Drop Side Table and Drop Barstool by COR, a premium German brand, has been launched in India by Plüsch. The Alvo Barstool can be rotated and could be equipped with a return mechanism if need be. Thanks to a triple fold, the traditional single cushions for the seat, back and armrests are not required. Characterised by a geometric design aesthetic and sleek proportions, the Drop Side Table displays understated luxury, perfect for contemporary homes. The Drop Barstool exhibits a laidback vibe and a minimal design aesthetic. In two height options, the stackable barstool displays a sleek design and is equipped with a transparent kick protection.

## Ashley bookcases

◆ Ashley Furniture Home Store has launched a new collection of chic bookcases that add an unexpected design element to your space, especially your home office. They are brought to India by Dash Square. The charming distressed look of the simple Realyn bookcase with peeled white paint and worn-out wood tone top brings a quaint antique feel to your space. Clean lines and a wonderfully weathered texture inspired by driftwood, defines the Raventown bookcase with cabinet storage on top with Nickel-tone pulls. Chic and rustic with a grey finish, the Johurst bookcase with a cross design at the back is ever fashionable. Made of wood, engineered wood and veneer, it features four shelves, two of which are adjustable.







## Ochre launches accessories

◆ Kolkata-based Ochre at Home (OAH) is known for their bespoke furniture and accessories that showcase radical and forward-looking designs yet are rooted in tradition. Their latest collection of décor pieces brings with them a striking modern and minimal aesthetic to your spaces. In his quest for new forms and rejuvenating looks, designer Ajay Arya introduces a collection of vases, sculptures and utilitarian objects like bookends, platters, candle stands, etc. that impress with an architectural appeal. Clean lines, arches and geometric forms come together to create a quiet elegance. Made of traditional materials like ceramic, glass and metal, the décor pieces add a refined new look to modern spaces.



## Hands unveils 'Urbane' carpets

◆ Hands Carpets has unveiled the 'Urbane' collection, which is a range of Tibetan hand knotted carpets made in wool, pure silk and botanical silk. The exquisite range comprises of contemporary rugs in striking geometrical shapes and intricate abstract patterns that render an elegant yet modest touch to any space.

## Faber launches Oxypure

◆ Oxypure, a vegetable & fruit cleaner, is a transcendent ozoniser which removes pesticides, bacteria, viruses and harmful chemicals from the surface of vegetables, fruits, sea food, meat and other eatables. Oxypure disinfects the food, while retaining its nutritional value, original flavour and taste, and extends the shelf life of food. The transcendent ozoniser comes with a high capacity of 10 litres and is easy and convenient to use. It has an automatic timer that let's you pre-set the time from 15 to 20 minutes, depending on your requirement. And, it also comes with a simple LED display to make it very easy to use the desired settings.



## Sculptures from Beyond Designs

◆ Beyond Designs Home has unveiled a collection of statement sculptures that introduce a dose of heritage and hand-crafted glory into modern homes. Hand-crafted in solid wood, the elephant sculpture on a base displays a weather-worn appeal, while twin parrots in sizes big and small, are finished in gold and mounted on sleek wooden bases. Exquisitely hand-crafted in solid wood, the majestic prancing horse is mounted on a contemporary base, while Garuda with golden wings is a refined sculpture crafted in wood.



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# Appointments



**NIKITA RAMCHANDANI**

General Manager  
JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu

★ The flagship property of JW Marriott hotels in India has appointed Nikita Ramchandani, as the first lady General Manager to lead the iconic hotel in the Maximum City. Ramchandani has previously led the Operations discipline for the 135-hotels Marriott International portfolio as the Senior Area Director of Operations where she was responsible for new openings, guest experiences and F&B growth. In her new role, she envisions a stellar roadmap for the hotel's positioning within the hospitality landscape.



**REEMA WADAJKAR**

Director of Events  
Hyatt Regency Pune Hotel & Residences

★ Hyatt Regency Pune & Residences has appointed Reema Wadajkar as their new Director of Events. Wadajkar brings with her 12 plus years of experience in the hospitality industry, specialising in weddings. She has worked with brands like The Oberoi Group, Taj Hotels, Accor, Marriott, Hilton in India, Conrad, Pune. In her new role, Wadajkar will be overseeing key sectors including business development, brand building, contract management, key account management, crisis management and client servicing.



**ASHISH SHUKLA**

Director of Sales – India  
Rational India

★ Rational International India a wholly-owned subsidiary of Rational AG – a Germany-based combi-steamer manufacturing giant, has appointed Ashish Shukla as the Director of Sales – India. With his passion and relentless commitment to Rational, Shukla has been a part of the organisation for the past 10 years. He joined as Regional Business Development Manager in 2010 and quickly rose up the ranks. In his new role, Shukla will be spearheading all the sales activities in the country for Rational.



**AMEET WAGH**

Corporate Sales, Revenue & Marketing Manager, Adamo Hotels

★ Ameet Wagh has joined Adamo Hotels as its Corporate Sales, Revenue & Marketing Manager. He has 20 years of experience in marketing, strategic alliances, revenue management, online sales including managing, improving and marketing SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) and SEM (Search Engine Marketing) for the brand website and marketing communications. He was previously with Sarovar Hotels & Resorts in Mumbai. In his new role, Wagh will be responsible for sales, revenue & marketing.



**RANJIT PATIL**

Executive Housekeeper  
Oakwood Premier Prestige Bangalore

★ Oakwood Premier Prestige Bangalore has appointed Ranjit Patil as Executive Housekeeper. With more than 12 years of experience in the luxury hospitality sector, Patil will be at the helm of all administrative affairs of all housekeeping and laundry facilities while ensuring a secure, safe and hygienic environment for guests. Patil has worked with Hyatt Hyderabad, Shangri-La Hotel Mumbai, Park Hyatt Goa Resort & Spa and Park Hyatt Hyderabad. His most recent association was with Conrad Bangalore as the Housekeeping Manager.



**SUMAN KIRTHI RAJ**

Chef De Cuisine  
Mercure Hyderabad KCP

★ Mercure Hyderabad KCP has appointed Suman Kirthi Raj as their Chef De Cuisine. Kirthi Raj brings with him 15 years of experience. He is an expert on local cuisine and is working towards populating it on a global platform. Kirthi Raj is also an expert on Asian and international cuisine. He plans to incorporate the fresh produce from the hotel on the table and a unique 'farm to fork' concept that blends with the local cuisine. Kirthi Raj also plans to introduce a unique line of menus that would be healthy yet delicious.





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