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President's Note



Dear Members and Stakeholders,

As we look forward to welcoming our esteemed delegates at the 55th Annual Convention in Bengaluru, I am delighted to share the extraordinary response we have received from our members and stakeholders for this landmark event. We are honoured to have confirmations from several distinguished dignitaries, including **Shri Siddaramaiah**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Karnataka; **Shri Rajnath Singh**, Hon'ble Defence Minister, Government of India; **Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Government of India; **Shri K Ram Mohan Naidu**, Hon'ble Minister of Civil Aviation, Government of India and **Shri DK Shivakumar**, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka.

The forthcoming convention promises to be a memorable and enriching experience for all delegates. It will stand as a tribute to the spirit of Indian hospitality — its resilience in the face of challenges, its capacity for innovation and its unwavering pursuit of excellence.

On 17 July 2025, in a landmark initiative to strengthen India's position on the global healthcare map, FHRAI, in association with the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, and the Ministry of AYUSH, organised the "Heal in India – Medical and Wellness Tourism Summit 2025" in New Delhi. Inaugurated by **Shri Suman Billa, IAS**, Additional Secretary and Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the summit brought together over 260 thought leaders and policymakers from healthcare, wellness, tourism and hospitality sectors, emphasising the need for a unified strategy to unlock India's vast potential in the global medical tourism arena.

During this Summit, FHRAI, in collaboration with KPMG India, launched a knowledge report titled "*Heal in India: Catalysing Medical and Wellness Tourism for a Healthier Global Future*." The report outlines a transformative national strategy that integrates India's advanced clinical expertise with its centuries-old wellness traditions, aiming

to establish the country as the world's most trusted destination for medical value travel (MVT).

In another significant development, to enhance global competitiveness and service excellence in Indian hospitality, FHRAI has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ETS India, the Indian subsidiary of the world's largest non-profit educational testing organisation, Educational Testing Service (ETS). The collaboration will establish robust, role-specific English communication benchmarks for the hospitality and restaurant sector using the TOEIC Link assessment.



It will stand as a tribute to the spirit of Indian hospitality — its resilience in the face of challenges and its unwavering pursuit of excellence."

By combining FHRAI's industry leadership with ETS's global assessment expertise, this partnership will drive sector-wide transformation in workforce readiness. With communication as a cornerstone of guest engagement and service delivery, the initiative focuses on integrating English language proficiency as a measurable hiring and training standard.

This partnership underscores FHRAI's commitment to raising service standards, improving employability and enabling India's hospitality professionals to compete on a global stage. It also positions ETS India as a strategic enabler in the country's skill development narrative.

We look forward to your continued support and patronage in all our endeavours.

Warm regards,
K Syama Raju
President, FHRAI



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10

B'luru set to host 55th FHRAI Annual Convention

The three-day convention will serve as a dynamic platform for professionals, discussing key trends & strategies that help shape the future of industry.



14

India's medical tourism to hit US\$ 58.2 bn by 2035

From launching the FHRAI-KPMG report to sharing insights, the summit calls for a strategic roadmap to strengthen global medical & wellness tourism.



16

Heal in India: Wellness tourism takes lead

With a blend of modern healthcare & cultural wisdom, India's medical & wellness tourism can play a big role in global positioning, asserts Suman Billa.



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24

Regional convention to take place in Mumbai

HRAWI set to host a Regional Convention along with its 75th Platinum Jubilee Year celebration, marking significant milestones.



30

Best practices for effective operations

Arjun Sharma shares an inclusive blueprint for operational excellence, from digital innovation to human-centric approaches.



46

Beyond banquets

Hotels are elevating weddings beyond traditional banquets to deliver highly personalised, memorable experiences.



58

Unlocking new horizons

With its global outlook, IHE 2025 provides a platform for suppliers to connect with buyers and showcase innovative products.

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B'luru set to host 55th FHRAI Annual Convention

The three-day convention will serve as a dynamic platform for professionals, discussing key trends & strategies that help shape the future of industry.



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Exploring the theme, 'FutureScape 2047: Redefining Hospitality for a New India,' the 55th FHRAI Annual Convention will take place in Bengaluru from 18–20 September 2025.

The landmark event will be graced by **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Minister for Tourism, Government of India and **Rajnath Singh**, Defence Minister, Government of India.

The convention will also see the presence of several distinguished dignitaries, including **Siddaramaiah**, Chief Minister of Karnataka, **K Ram Mohan Naidu**, Minister of Civil Aviation, Government of



India, **DK Shivakumar**, Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Karnataka, **MB Patil**, Minister for Large and

The landmark event, which will be held in Bengaluru, promises a unique confluence of ideas, leadership and industry innovation

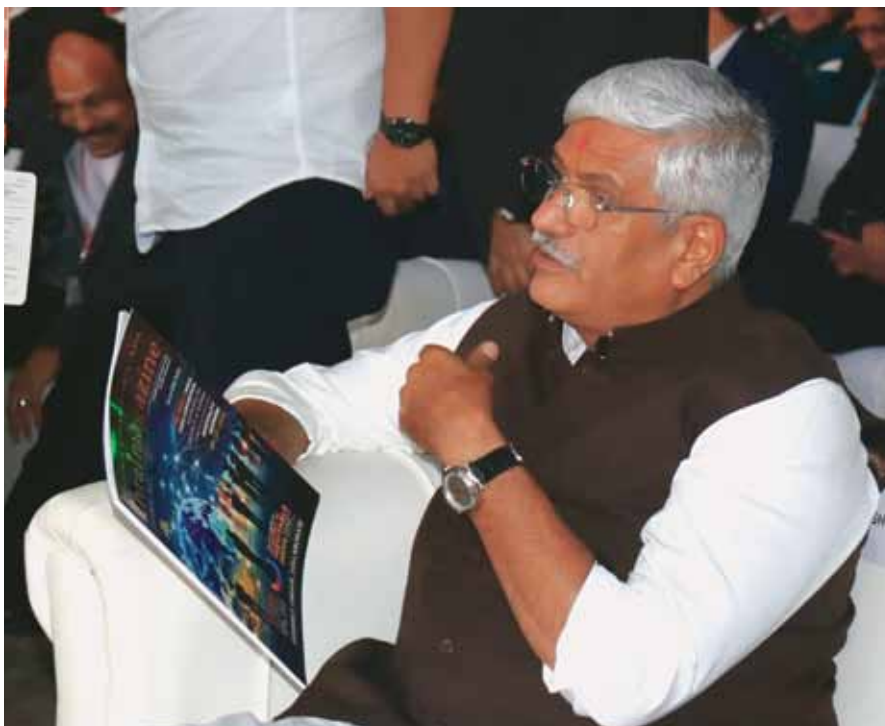
Medium Industries, Government of Karnataka, **V Vidyavathi**, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and **Suman Billa**, Additional Secretary & Director General, Ministry of Tourism.

The association stated, "We look forward to your active participation in this landmark event, which promises to be a unique confluence of ideas, leadership and industry innovation."

Registration is open for the FHRAI Annual Convention. For online and offline registration, delegates can visit the following links:

- https://fhraiconvention.com/convention_registration.aspx
- *Delegate Registration Form*
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dFW1kgOWfRleHXtbm00ZTUadnoTOzO0H/view>

The last date of registration is 10th September 2025. □



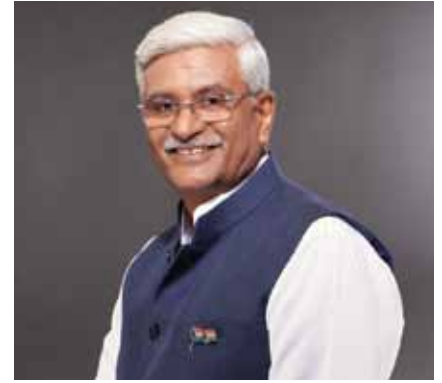
Top leaders set to converge at 55th FHRAI Annual Convention



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Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka



Shri Rajnath Singh
Minister of Defence
India



Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat
Minister of Tourism and Culture
Government of India



Shri Rammohan Naidu Kinjarapu
Minister of Civil Aviation
Government of India



Shri HK Patil
Minister for Law, Justice, Human Rights and
Parliamentary Affairs, Legislation & Tourism and
Gadag District In-charge Minister, Govt. of Karnataka



Shri DK Shivakumar
Deputy Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka



Shri MB Patil
Minister of Large & Medium Industries &
Infrastructure Development,
Government of Karnataka



Ms V Vidyavathi
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism
Government of India



Shri Suman Billa
Additional Secretary & Director General, Ministry of
Tourism, Government of India

Celebration of excellence and innovation

FHRAI invites applications for its prestigious 'FHRAI Awards for Hospitality Excellence 2025,' acknowledging outstanding contributions to hospitality.



DDP Bureau


FHRAI has invited applications from its members for the 'FHRAI Awards for Hospitality Excellence 2025.' The awards will be presented at a glittering ceremony on 20 September 2025, during the 55th FHRAI Annual Convention.

The awards aim to recognise and celebrate outstanding achievements of young professionals and excellence in the hospitality industry. Over the years, the FHRAI Awards have firmly established its reputation as the most credible and coveted

accolades in the hospitality sector, celebrating the spirit of hospitality.

This year's awards have three categories — Individual Entrepreneur Awards, Individual Manager Awards and Institutional Awards. Individual Entrepreneur Awards includes Young Hotelier of the Year and Restaurant Entrepreneur of the Year. Individual Manager Awards comprises Hotel General Manager/Hotel Manager of the Year, Hotel F&B Manager of the Year, Chef of the Year, Hotel Front Office Manager of the Year, Hotel House Keeper of the Year, Hotel Sales Manager of the Year, Hotel Marketing Manager of

the Year, Restaurant Marketing Manager of the Year, Hotel Revenue Manager of the Year, Restaurant Manager of the Year, Hotel HR Manager of the Year, Security Manager of the Year and Hospitality Journalist of the Year. The Institutional Awards category includes Best Hospitality Institute of the Year, Best Hotel Spa of the Year, Best Wellness Resort of the year and Green Hotel of the year.

The application forms will be available from the awards section of the FHRAI website. The completed form can be submitted to eatosg@fhrai.com. The last date for submission is 20 August 2025. 

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India's medical tourism to hit US\$ 58.2 bn by 2035

From launching the FHRAI-KPMG report to sharing insights, FHRAI's summit calls for a strategic roadmap to gain a strong foothold in global medical & wellness tourism.



Surbhi Sharma

To elevate India's position on the global healthcare map, FHRAI recently organised 'Heal in India 2025 Medical & Wellness Tourism Summit' in Delhi. At the event, FHRAI, in collaboration with KPMG India, launched its flagship report, 'Heal in India: Catalysing Medical and Wellness Tourism for a Healthier Global Future.' In his address, **K Syama Raju**, President, FHRAI, said, "Heal in India is more than a healthcare initiative — it is a nation-branding opportunity." He also emphasised that as custodians

of India's hospitality and tourism landscape, we see this as a chance to integrate care with culture and comfort with credibility."

Indicating a substantial growth for medical tourism, **Someswara Koundinya**, Director, KPMG India, said, "India's medical tourism market is set to surge from US\$ 18.2 billion in 2025 to US\$ 58.2 billion by 2035. India must lead not just in treating illness, but in promoting long-term wellness. With the right policy support, digital tools and global outreach, we have the opportunity to become the world's healing capital." He also highlighted that India ranks 10th in the medical tourism index and

7th in wellness tourism, attracting 2 million international patients from 75 countries.

With the hospitality industry's readiness to support and enhance India's healing journey through culturally sensitive service excellence, **Rahool Macarius**, Market Managing Director, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, stressed that people globally emphasise cleanliness, security, health and hygiene and their hotels are fulfilling all these aspects.

Yogendra Agnihotri, Senior Regional Director Operations-South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, "Wellness tourism is emerging as the most promising growth lever for the hos-





Beyond a healthcare initiative, Heal in India is a nation-branding opportunity

hospitality sector, globally and especially in India. It could generate US\$ 40 billion in five years, outpacing the hospitality industry's own CAGR of 14 per cent. The country's deep roots in Ayurveda, Siddha and traditional medicine make it exceptionally well-placed to lead."

As hotels are now offering integrated wellness experiences, from sleep therapies and curated dining to yoga centres and collaborations with wellness experts, he noted that India can truly become the wellness capital of the world, provided we strengthen infrastructure and build authentic experiences rooted in trust.

Subhas Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travels, pointed out, "Our hospitals are world standard, but a lot of our

Ayurvedic centres, except for a few, are not clean and the equipment is not modern. We need to upgrade them, which is very important." He also shed light on the importance of leveraging airline networks for medical tourism, urging for strategic market focus as the need of the hour.

During the event, experts from the medical industry called for a single-window platform to promote and streamline medical tourism in India.

Sunil Khetarpal, Director, Association of Healthcare Providers (India), asserted, "A unified national policy is essential to provide a standardised experience for international patients. India's medical tourism sector is highly fragmented with multiple sectors involved." He advocated for policy frameworks similar to NABH, aligned with global models like the German TIMO standard, which is followed by 14 countries. □





Heal in India

Wellness tourism takes lead

With a blend of modern healthcare & cultural wisdom, India's medical and wellness tourism can play a significant role in global positioning, asserts **Suman Billa**.



Surbhi Sharma

In a world increasingly seeking holistic healing, India stands at a transformative crossroad, where wellness meets economic ambition. Speaking at the 'Heal in India 2025 Medical & Wellness Tourism Summit,' **Suman Billa**, Additional Secretary and Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, articulated a powerful vision of India's tourism economy reaching US\$3 trillion by 2047, marking 100 years of independence. He highlighted that at the heart of this goal lies a clear strategy, making medical and wellness tourism not just sectors,

but strong strategic pillars of India's global positioning.

Modern & ancient practices

India is uniquely positioned at the intersection of clinical excellence and cultural wisdom. While other countries may boast advanced medical facilities or ancient healing systems, India blends both. "Our USP is not just great doctors and hospitals, but our ancient systems of healing—Ayurveda, Yoga and Siddha that treat the body, mind and spirit," he noted while adding, "The key message is India must evolve from being a place 'where you are treated' to 'where you come to heal.'" Medical tourism which is currently valued



SUMAN BILLA

Additional Secretary and
Director General, Ministry of
Tourism, Government of India

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Focus on global campaigns targeting GCC, Africa and SAARC for medical and the West for wellness tourism

at US\$ 7.6 billion and wellness tourism at US\$ 19.4 billion, are expected to double in five years, making them critical levers for tourism-led GDP growth, job creation and foreign exchange.

Trust-building approach

The challenge in the sector is not solely achieving scale, but cultivating and maintaining trust is vital for long-term success. To ramp up India's credibility in this sector, Billa suggested that it must focus on providing seamless experiences, exceptional services, international standards, safety and security.

Actionable steps

Outlining a clear roadmap, Billa stressed the need to create a unified digital platform, integrating hospi-



tals, hotels and wellness centres. He suggested the development of 10 medical-wellness tourism clusters by 2027 to act as focused growth zones and also focus on incentivising states and service providers for quality outcomes.

Besides, there is a need to bridge gaps in standardisation and skilling, especially in tier-II and III cities. Billa also advocated for running global campaigns targeting GCC, Africa and SAARC for medical and the West for wellness to position India as the world's top healing destination.

Soft power in the making

"To project India as a healing soft power, we need to make 'Heal in India' campaign a global movement where the country heals the world, not just with its science but also with its soul," Billa underscored.

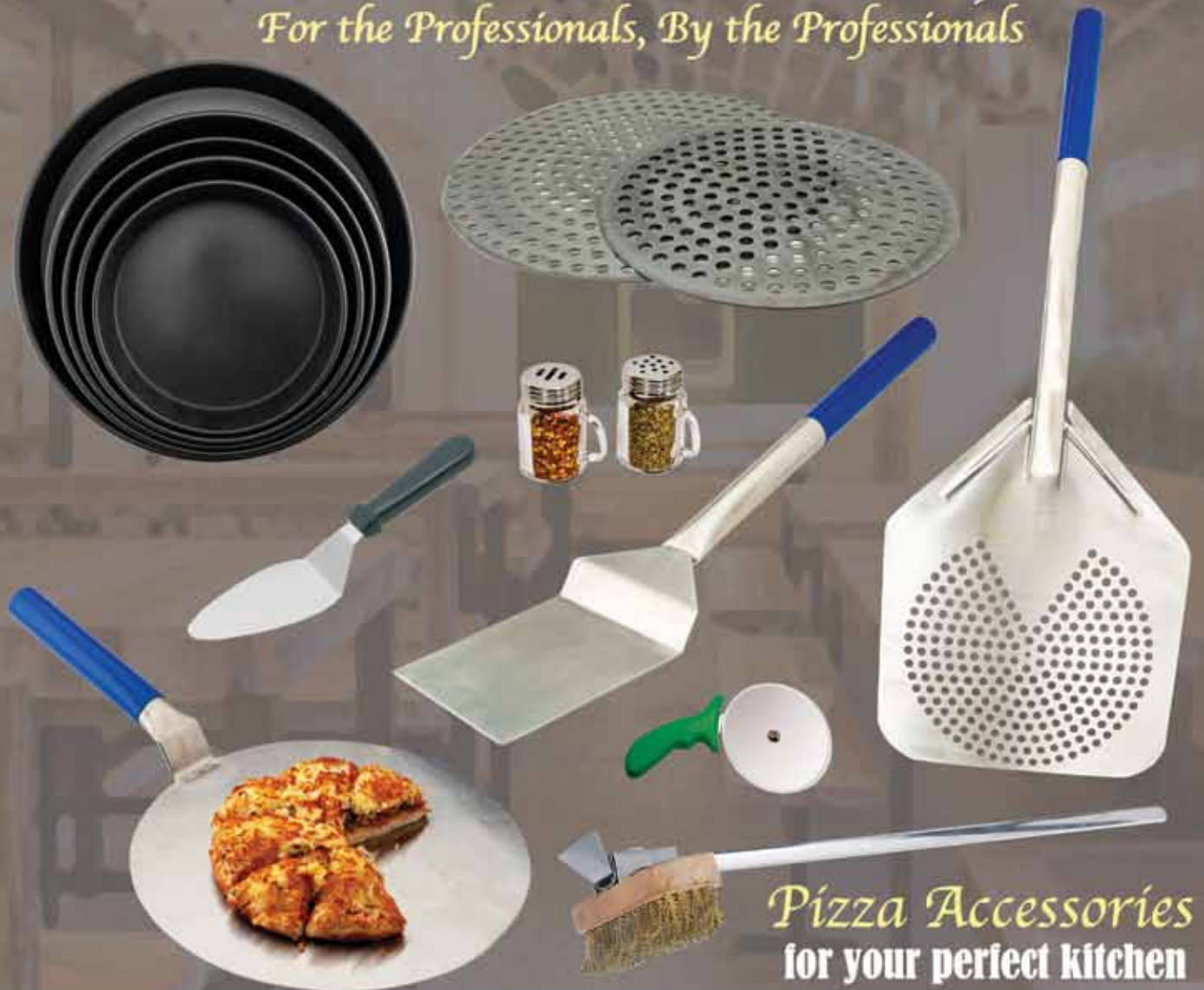
For stakeholders across tourism, healthcare, hospitality and wellness, the message is clear, India's next leap in tourism is not just about numbers, it is about nurturing global trust, creating seamless ecosystems and harnessing its ancient roots to shape its modern future. ■





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Push for revision of star classification norms

Highlighting the challenge caused by outdated practices, FHRAI pleads for reforms of the star classification procedures of MoT for greater efficiency.



DDP Bureau

In a move to enhance efficiency in the hotel classification process, FHRAI has urged to revise the star classification guidelines of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India.

To bring improved classification parameters, the association highlights the following suggestions:

Streamlining the classification process: Reduce paperwork and digitalise submissions through a single-step online document submission and review mechanism, which

can significantly reduce processing time from 60-90 days to less than 30 days. Automate and expedite the inspection of scheduling process and pre-set inspection slots should be available for hotels to select, ensuring timely inspections. Enable a single-window query resolution, where all queries from MoT/DOT should be



Create a robust mechanism for a single-step online document submission, which can reduce processing time

consolidated and addressed at one time instead of raising queries at multiple stages.

Simplification of NIDHI+ app: The requirement to capture 40 elements in rooms and 20 in bathrooms is excessive. The focus should be on key compliance metrics, reducing the workload on inspection teams and hotels. Redesign the app interface to



differentiate between mandatory and desirable elements for 5-star deluxe, 1-star and 2-star hotels.

Reinstatement of the checklist-based system: The previous checklist system was more objective, transparent, and fair. The new textual grading system should be revised to ensure conformity with HRACC guidelines. Also, replace vague textual descriptors with quantifiable metrics.

Correction of errors: Several parameters listed as “optional” in the app are actually mandatory as per HRACC guidelines. This misalignment must be corrected to avoid confusion for hotels and inspection teams. Also, hotels built before 2012 are exempt from STP (Sewage Treatment Plant) requirements. The app should have an option for such exemptions, which will help in reducing unnecessary compliance pressure.

Eliminate disincentives for classification: The classification status of a hotel should not be linked to penalties, increased licensing fees or taxes. It should be used as a quality assurance tool rather than a revenue-generation mechanism for the government. In states like Kerala, star

classification is mandatory for bar licenses. This condition should be removed as it devalues the classification process. Bar licenses should be governed under a separate regulatory framework.

Greater transparency and accountability: Create a real-time tracking system for classification applications, which would increase transparency and accountability, allowing hotels to see the exact status of their application. Introduce a formal appeal process where hotels can contest classification outcomes. This would improve accountability and reduce arbitrary decision-making.

Decouple star classification from incentives/disincentives: Central and state governments must recognise that star classification is a **quality benchmark** and not a revenue tool. It should not be linked to eligibility for incentives, subsidies or taxes.

Separate excise and liquor licenses: To protect the integrity of the classification process, bar licenses should not be contingent on star classification. This will ensure that hotels pursue classification for quality and not for commercial advantage.



Encourage voluntary participation:

Encourage hotels to apply for classification by offering benefits like marketing support, access to tourism promotion programmes and fee waivers for the first classification. This approach will increase voluntary participation.

Showcase star-rated hotels: Create a dedicated online platform for all classified hotels to be listed, giving them visibility and marketing advantages, thus incentivising other hotels to seek classification.

Foster consistency across states: Remove inconsistencies in state-level

rules and classifications, ensuring uniformity in processes and parameters across India. States should not introduce additional requirements beyond what is prescribed in HRACC guidelines.

Centralised grievance redressal:

Set up a central grievance redressal system where hotels can raise issues about discrepancies or unfair treatment during classification.

Reconsidering pod room in 5-star classification: The pod room for 5-star classification should not be made a mandatory or necessity because it is not a guest requirement.

The spa salon serves as an alternative for this service. The guest room is a private accommodation and should be treated with strict privacy, not a meeting place.

Universal design for handicap accessible rooms:

To ensure comfort for all guests, the handicapped or physically challenged room should be a universal accommodation. Hotel rooms should not be empty, so if there is no handicapped individual, it should suffice to a normal person. It should have ease for both handicapped and regular guest.

Reclassification for upto 3-star hotels:

For reclassification up to 3-star hotels, site inspection should not be mandatory condition. It should be allowed to do it through online or by paperwork.

Establishment of a centralised helpdesk:

A dedicated helpdesk should be set up under the MoT to serve as a single point of contact for hotels seeking classification.

Time-bound processing: To enhance efficiency, the classification process should be time-bound with clearly defined timelines at each stage (application review, site inspection and decision issuance). □



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Regional Convention returns for its 20th edition in Mumbai

HRAWI is gung-ho to host a two-day Regional Convention along with its 75th Platinum Jubilee Year celebration, marking significant milestones.



HRAWI has announced its plans to host the 20th edition of its Regional Convention on 8–9 October 2025 at the Crystal Room, The Taj Mahal Palace. Centred on the theme, “75 Years of Service, Solidarity and Success,” the landmark event will also commemorate HRAWI’s 75th Platinum Jubilee Year, making it one of the most significant and symbolic milestones in the association’s history.

Returning to its hometown of Mumbai, a thriving hub of hospitality, the convention will bring together industry leaders, policymakers, visionaries and key stakeholders to engage in high-impact discussions

on the future of hospitality and tourism. HRAWI has a long-standing legacy of hosting impactful conventions across destinations including Lavasa, Pune, Colombo and Nashik, as well as organising Empowering Hospitality Conclave & Awards series in Pune, Ahmedabad, Nagpur and Nashik.

Double celebrations

“This year’s convention holds immense significance as it marks our Platinum Jubilee, a celebration of 75 glorious years of service to the industry. Hosting it at the iconic Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, where the journey of HRAWI first began under the guidance of the legendary JRD Tata is a moment of pride, legacy and renewal,” said **Jimmy Shaw**, President, HRAWI.



He further added that the tourism and hospitality sector is a key pillar in their vision of ‘Viksit Maharashtra 2047,’ aligned with the Prime Minister’s national mission of ‘Viksit Bharat 2047.’ The convention will spotlight the strategies, innovations and partnerships needed to power the ambition.

Charting a course

The two-day convention will feature keynote addresses, expert-led business sessions and networking opportunities designed to promote



The convention will be hosted at the iconic Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, where the journey of HRAWI first began under the guidance of the legendary JRD Tata

meaningful dialogue and collaboration. Set against the vibrant cultural and business backdrop of Mumbai, the event promises a world-class experience for delegates and guests from across the region.

“The convention is more than just a celebration; it is a platform to chart the course for the next phase of hospitality in India. We invite all our members to participate in this landmark convention. Whether you are a restaurateur, hotelier, consultant or vendor, the convention will offer invaluable perspectives, tools and

connections. We look forward to welcoming our fraternity to a city that embodies resilience, innovation and hospitality at its finest,” said Shaw.

HRAWI includes a diverse range of hospitality brands, including Taj, Oberoi, ITC, Leela, Marriott, Radisson, IHG, Hyatt, Accor, Fern, Sarovar, Royal Orchid, Pride, Lemon Tree, Lords, as well as numerous standalone hotels and restaurants across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa and the Union Territories of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. □

A call to strengthen Tamil Nadu's tourism potential

Emphasising concerted efforts, SIHRA seeks **Thiru T Christuraj**'s support to position Tamil Nadu as a top-tier tourism destination in India and globally.



DDP Bureau

SIHRA engaged in a productive discussion with **Thiru T Christuraj**, IAS, Director of Tourism, Tamil Nadu, on collaborative efforts to promote tourism. During the interaction, SIHRA briefed the Director on its continued efforts and activities in promoting Tamil Nadu as a prime tourism destination across India and internationally.

Expressing his keen interest, Christuraj stressed the significance of collaboration with stakeholders in the industry. He also assured his

support towards strengthening Tamil Nadu's tourism potential through

meaningful partnerships and innovative initiatives. 

The discussion focuses on facilitating Tamil Nadu's tourism potential through meaningful partnerships and innovative initiatives



Skill training for tribal youth empowerment

Supported by the Kanniyakumari's District Collector, SIHRA organises training programmes to equip tribal youth with key skills to thrive in the industry.



DDP Bureau


Initiated by **Alagu Meena**, IAS, District Collector, Kanniyakumari, SIHRA successfully conducted a tourism and hospitality skill training

programme for tribal candidates at the Kalikesam Eco Camp in Kanyakumari district. More than 38 candidates participated the event.

This initiative was carried out with the support of the Tamil Nadu

Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC), the District Administration of Kanyakumari, the Forest Department and the Tamil Nadu Tourism. Lauding the initiative, SIHRA ex-

Forty tribal candidates participated in the hospitality skill training programme at the Kalikesam Eco Camp in Kanyakumari

pressed gratitude for the proactive efforts of the District Collector and all supporting departments. The association acknowledged their commitment and endeavours towards empowering local communities and promoting sustainable tourism." 





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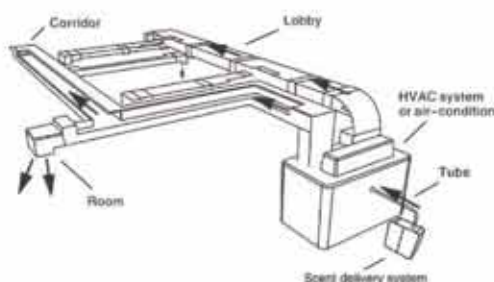
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HRANI Managing Committee discusses key sector reforms in Lucknow meeting

At the Managing Committee meeting, HRANI discussed the industry's key challenges and also addressed concerns raised by members.

The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Northern India (HRANI) held its Managing Committee meeting at Ramada Plaza by Wyndham, Lucknow. The session served as a platform for deliberation on several pressing issues affecting the hospitality industry, including taxation, environmental regulations, infrastructure status, and sustainable practices.

The committee discussed a comprehensive seven-point agenda presented by Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, President, HRANI and Vice President FHRAI. The key points included: Grant of Infrastructure Status to the hospitality sector, a long-pending demand aimed at unlocking easier access to funding and policy benefits for hotels and restaurants. Rationalization of CST, specifically the delinking of food and beverage services from room tariffs, to ensure fair taxation and allow the benefit of



Input Tax Credit. Addressing concerns raised by member establishments regarding compliance and licensing complexities including copyright societies. Re-categorisation of Hotels under the pollution index, with emphasis on shifting qualifying properties from the 'Red' to the 'Orange' or 'White' category in collaboration with the Ministry

of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Introduction of a New Hotel Classification System, modeled on the successful initiative by the Government of Uttar Pradesh, with a proposal of similar systems across other states for greater standardization and ease. Grievance Redressal Forum to address member concerns, policy bottlenecks and day-to-day





operational issues in a structured and timely manner.

The committee welcomed the initiatives and reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with both central and state governments to push for reforms that support industry growth and long-term sustainability. The meeting concluded with a visit to the holy city of Ayodhya, providing the committee members an opportunity to experience the region's cultural richness and evolving tourism landscape. ▣



Best practices & innovations for effective hospitality operations

To elevate hospitality to new heights, **Arjun Sharma** shares an inclusive blueprint for operational excellence, from digital innovation to human-centric approaches.



DDP Bureau

In the ever-evolving landscape of hospitality, innovation is no longer an option — it is an imperative to survive and thrive. The last few years have not only altered guest expectations but have also redefined the fundamentals of what it means to operate a hotel or a restaurant in the modern world. Operational excellence today must be measured not merely in terms of efficiency or elegance, but in purpose, personalisation and progress.

The hospitality business, at its heart, is about creating moments that inspire, nourish, connect and engage. And at the core of these moments are the operations that make them possible. The hotels and restaurants of the future must not only serve but serve meaningfully.

Wellness as a foundational principle

If I had to name one pillar which the operations of tomorrow should revolve around, it would be wellness — not as a bolt-on offering, but as an embedded operational ethos.



ARJUN SHARMA

Chairman
Select Group

At our properties, wellness is no longer relegated to the spa or the gym. It permeates even to the menu and staff culture.

We have introduced healthy menus that prioritise plant-forward options, slow cook-



“The best practices in sustainability also extend to the human side of operations, such as fair wages, inclusive hiring and skill-building initiatives.”

ing techniques, local sourcing and functional ingredients such as ancient grains and cold-pressed oils. This is not a passing trend — it is a response to a growing demographic that is increasingly discerning about what they consume. We do not use palm oil in our hotels — neither for guests nor in the staff cafeteria.

More than ever before, travellers are seeking luxury with health. Whether it is infusing vitamin C in the shower water, ensuring air quality through in-room purification systems or offering sleep rituals with weighted blankets and calming music,

the operational focus is on optimising the guest’s mind-body equilibrium.

Sustainability is the new luxury

Today’s guest, in all segments, is deeply invested in responsible consumption. I have had the privilege of experiencing hospitality in some of the most conscious properties globally. The lesson is clear — sustainability is not just about ticking boxes; it is about integrating ethical thinking into every layer of operations.

Even at our properties, Heritage Village Resorts & Spa Manesar and Heritage Village Resorts and Spa Goa, the approach has been to integrate sustainability without compromising on comfort. For instance:

- Sourcing hyper-local ingredients, thus supporting local farmers while reducing our carbon footprint.
- Drip irrigation systems have been thoughtfully laid out across the gardens to ensure efficient water management. Besides, rainwater harvesting practices are followed to help replenish the water table. Public washrooms are equipped with sensor-based taps to regulate water consumption.



The architect of India’s retail and hospitality renaissance

Arjun Sharma is a distinguished business leader shaping India’s retail, hospitality and tourism landscape.

As Chairman of Select Group, he has been instrumental in developing Nexus Select Trust, India’s first shopping centre REIT, in partnership with Blackstone. The REIT comprises 19 world-class malls across 14 cities, with over 10.06 million sq ft of retail space and office assets alongside two premium hotels — Hyatt Regency Chandigarh and Oakwood Residence Whitefield Bangalore. He also leads Heritage Village Resorts in Goa and Manesar, known for their award-winning hospitality. A seasoned entrepreneur and travel and tourism professional, he played a pivotal role in scaling Le Passage to India and taking its joint venture with TUI AG into India’s leading business.



- Use an organic waste converter that shreds food waste, which is then combined with bio-enzymes to produce nutrient-rich manure.

The best practices in sustainability also extend to the human side of operations, such as fair wages, inclusive hiring, skill-building initiatives and promoting women in leadership.

process of integrating it into our operational framework. Our focus is on leveraging technology to enable better guest experiences, enhance efficiency and support our teams — not to replace people, but to empower them.

Our approach is to blend innovation with empathy. Even as we explore smarter systems and AI-enabled tools, we remain grounded in our belief that hospitality must always feel personal, warm and human at its core.

“No operational strategy, however advanced, can succeed without a motivated team.”

Tech-enabled, human-centred

Hospitality has always been defined by the human touch, but in today's fast-changing world, technological innovation must be embraced thoughtfully to support and elevate human connection. Among the most significant shifts ahead is the role of artificial intelligence (AI) that will help optimise hotel and restaurant operations.

At Select Group, we recognise the growing importance of AI and are actively in the

Experience: Ultimate differentiator

Luxury is no longer just about marble floors or gold-plated cutlery. The most important aspect of hospitality is how you make a guest feel. And that feeling comes from carefully curated experiences that blend authenticity and personalisation and surprise.

We all have to become 'Experience Curators,' trained not just in service but in storytelling, local culture, wellness rituals and even photography.

Design thinking: Operational fluidity

Design is not merely an aesthetic decision; it is an operational enabler. Hotels and restaurants that flow well, work well. One of the most overlooked best practices is rethinking design for functionality. For example:




beautification of walls is done entirely by hand, painted meticulously by local artists from Rajasthan.

Team culture

No operational strategy, however advanced, can succeed without a motivated team. We focus on cross-functional training, mental wellness programmes and internal leadership pipelines. It is essential to recognise that the guest journey is only as smooth as the employee's experience behind the scenes. We are also seeing younger staff care deeply about purpose. They are not just looking for jobs — they are seeking alignment with our values.

Vision rooted in values

The best practices in hospitality are not defined by one-off innovations, but by a constant and endearing set of values, experience-driven and wellness-conscious mindset. As I often remind our team — let's not chase trends, let's shape them — by staying true to the timeless principles of hospitality while embracing the tools of a new era. 

- Placing kitchens closer to service elevators to reduce response time
- Designing open pantries for guests on-the-go, especially relevant in business or transit hotels
- Using modular furniture that can be reconfigured based on seasonality or group size

Return of craftsmanship

As we forward with automation and technological enhancements, there is also a powerful counter trend — one that celebrates handmade and heartfelt craftsmanship. Guests today are not only looking for comfort and efficiency; they are seeking authenticity. And that authenticity often lies in the quiet beauty of craftsmanship.

In our restaurants, we are consciously making an effort to revive age-old techniques like pickling and clay-pot cooking. These practices not only elevate the flavour profile but tell a story of patience, culture and skill. This ethos extends to our beverage programme as well. We have a refined tea ritual — one that goes far beyond placing a sachet in a cup of hot water, from selecting whole-leaf blends to brewing at precise temperatures.

Beyond food and beverage, this celebration of craft extends to our spaces. The



FHRAI, ETS India to define communication benchmarks

To gauge workforce English skills, FHRAI ties with ETS India to conduct TOEIC Link assessment and establish benchmarks aligning with global standards.



DDP Bureau

To boost global competitiveness and service excellence in Indian hospitality, FHRAI has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ETS India, the Indian subsidiary of Educational Testing Service (ETS). The partnership aimed to establish robust, role-specific English communication benchmarks for the hospitality and restaurant sector using the TOEIC Link assessment.

The collaboration brings together FHRAI's industry leadership and ETS's global assessment expertise to drive a sector-wide transformation in workforce readiness. With communication as the cornerstone of guest engagement and service delivery, the MoU focuses on integrating English language proficiency as a measurable hiring and training standard.


K Syama Raju, President, FHRAI, said, "This partnership is a significant step towards standardising hospitality communication skills across our member hotels and institutes. With ETS India's support, we aim to establish clear benchmarks that will help our industry meet global service expectations."

Sachin Jain, Country Manager India and South Asia, ETS, stated, "By working with FHRAI, we hope to not only bridge the English communication gap but also help create a standardised, scalable framework for talent development in the hospitality sector."

The TOEIC Link assessment, developed by ETS, is a modular and flexible English communication test aligned with the internationally recognised Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Under the agreement, FHRAI will identify a representative

"This partnership is a significant step towards standardising hospitality communication skills across our member hotels and institutes."

sample of hotels and Institutes of Hotel Management (IHMs), to participate in a pilot benchmarking study.

ETS India will conduct TOEIC Link assessments for hotel staff, new recruits, and final-year IHM students to define minimum communication requirements tailored to key job roles, such as front office, housekeeping, and food and beverage services. 

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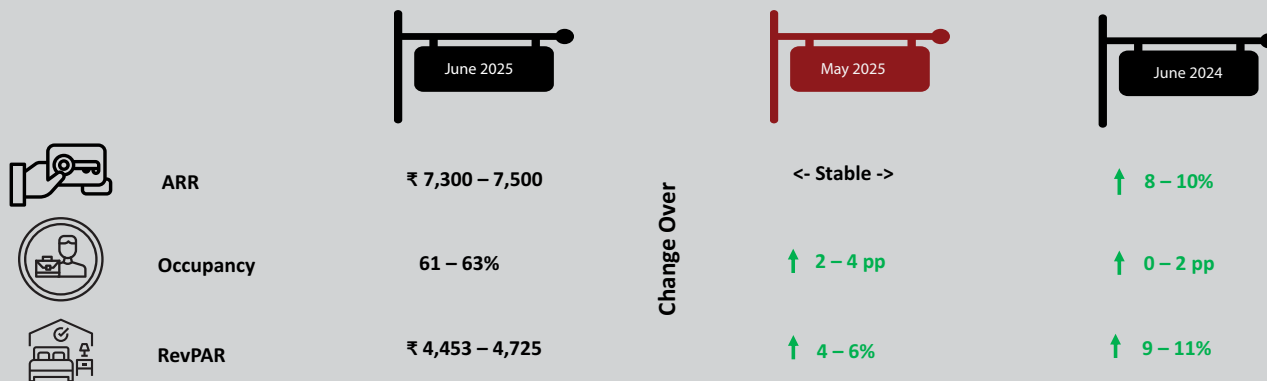
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Source: HVS ANAROCK Research; Data for Calendar Year
Cover Image Courtesy: DoubleTree by Hilton Whitefield, Bengaluru

Mumbai & New Delhi gain top position in hotel rates

Hyderabad stands out with the highest YoY increase in ARR, while Jaipur and Ahmedabad register robust YoY growth in hotel occupancy in June.



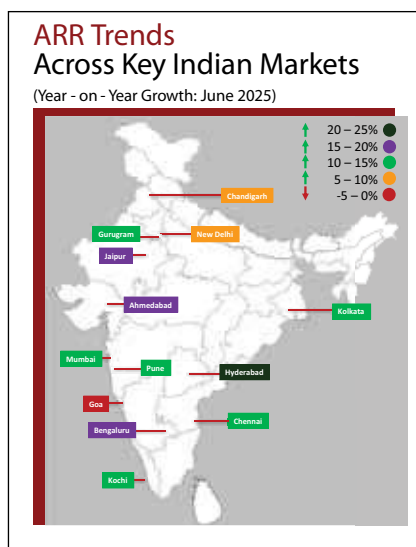
DDP Bureau

According to HVS Anarock, June 2025 witnessed a stable performance for the Indian hotel sector, as early monsoon getaways and travel along new infrastructure corridors helped offset the impact of external disruptions, including the Air India Flight AI171 crash, the Bengaluru crowd tragedy and geopolitical tensions.

ARR trends

The report indicated that the average rates in June 2025 saw robust year-on-year (YoY) growth, with double-digit gains in several cities. Mum-

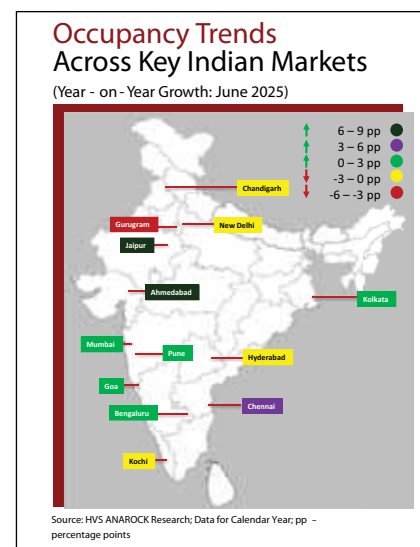
“The average rates in June 2025 saw robust year-on-year growth, with double-digit gains in several cities.”



bai and New Delhi maintained their premium positioning, with average rates exceeding ₹10,000 and ₹8,500, respectively. Meanwhile, Hyderabad saw the highest YoY growth. Goa experienced a YoY dip in average rates, likely due to the post-summer travel slowdown, early monsoon onset and subdued leisure demand.

Occupancy performance

On the occupancy front, hotels dis-



played mixed performance across Indian markets, with overall marginal year-on-year improvement at the national level. However, regional disparities remained evident, driven by geopolitical uncertainty, early monsoon impact and shifting travel patterns.

Chennai led the country in occupancy, closely followed by Mumbai, with both cities clocking rates in the 73-76 per cent range. □

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Small cities, shining future for hospitality

Hotel brands are moving beyond metros, shifting their attention to II and III cities, as they offer lower land and construction costs coupled with better connectivity.

Small markets offer a strategic advantage: SIHRA

“

The winning formula will blend operational efficiency with deep local engagement.”



K SYAMA RAJU

President
SIHRA

India's hospitality growth story is no longer confined to its metro skylines. The real momentum today is in tier II and tier III cities — in the temple towns, industrial hubs, heritage corridors and emerging commercial clusters that are quietly reshaping the nation's travel map.

Rising disposable incomes, improved connectivity and the aspirational shift of India's next 400 million consumers are fuelling demand for quality accommodation and dining experiences in these cities. High-speed rail, upgraded airports and better road networks are bringing once-remote destinations within a few hours of major metros, turning weekend getaways and business stop-overs into viable revenue streams.

Leading Indian and international hotel brands have recognised this shift. Chains that once concentrated their expansion pipelines in metro and gateway cities are now signing properties in places like Bhubaneswar, Coimbatore, Madurai, Nashik and Surat. The appeal is clear — lower development costs, faster project turnaround and a fast-growing customer base eager for branded hospitality experiences that still reflect local flavour. This focus is not just about filling gaps in supply — it is about seizing first-mover advantage in markets poised for exponential growth.

For investors and operators, these destinations offer a distinct advantage — less saturation, a strong domestic travel segment and the ability to create unique propositions. These range from smart mid-scale hotels for business travellers to boutique resorts that curate authentic cultural stays.

Yet, success in these markets demands more than copy-pasting metro models. The winning formula will blend operational efficiency with deep local engagement — sourcing ingredients from nearby farms, partnering with local artisans and training hospitality staff from within the community.

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Incentivise investment in non-metro cities: HRAWI

“

By investing in smaller towns, hospitality plays a pivotal role in local job creation, cultural preservation and regional development.”



JIMMY SHAW

President
HRAWI

The Indian hospitality sector is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by the increasing focus on tier II and III cities. With rapid urbanisation, improved infrastructure, growing disposable incomes and rising aspirations in these regions, the demand for quality hospitality experiences is stronger than ever. This shift presents a golden opportunity for hospitality stakeholders to diversify portfolios beyond the saturated metros and tap into the untapped potential of emerging markets.

From a strategic standpoint, tier II and III cities offer more than just cost advantages. These locations are becoming important economic and industrial hubs, thanks to smart city projects, logistics corridors and Government-backed initiatives to decentralise development. As these cities evolve, so do the expectations of travellers, both business and leisure, who seek quality accommodation, dining and service experiences comparable to those in urban centres.

For investors, the lower land and operational costs in smaller cities make them ideal for mid-scale and budget hotel models. What is encouraging is that consumer behaviour in these regions is evolving rapidly, with growing demand for branded hospitality experiences. This is further supported by the surge in domestic tourism, spurred by better road, rail and air connectivity and the rise of regional airports under the UDAN scheme.

At HRAWI, we have consistently advocated for policies that incentivise investment in lesser-known destinations. The Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024, for instance, is a progressive step in this direction, offering capital subsidies, Floor Space Index relaxation and infrastructure development support for projects in underdeveloped regions. Such measures will play a key role in decentralising tourism and encouraging hospitality development in non-metro markets.

The shift to tier II and III cities also aligns with the broader national vision of ‘Viksit Bharat 2047,’ where inclusive economic growth is a key priority. By investing in smaller towns, the hospitality sector not only caters to emerging demand but also plays a pivotal role in local job creation, cultural preservation and regional development.

As we move ahead, hospitality stakeholders must adopt a hyperlocal approach that integrates community participation, sustainability and cultural identity into their offerings. The future of Indian hospitality lies not just in the metros, but in the heart of Bharat. Now is the time to embrace that opportunity. ▣



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Small towns offer higher cost-efficiency: HRANI

“

The future of Indian hospitality is not confined to metros alone.”



SURENDRA K JAISWAL

President
HRANI

India's hospitality sector is witnessing a strategic and timely shift. As the Indian economy grows and regional infrastructure improves, these smaller cities are fast becoming vital economic hubs, attracting both business and leisure travellers. For hospitality stakeholders, this presents an opportunity to align with the aspirations of a New India — one that extends beyond metropolitan boundaries.

The rising disposable incomes and a burgeoning middle class in these cities are reshaping travel and consumption patterns. With enhanced connectivity and better civic amenities, these cities are no longer considered remote. Business travellers are increasingly visiting these locations for regional trade, industrial growth and government projects.

One of the most compelling reasons for investment in these cities is the lower cost of land acquisition and construction. Compared to metro cities, development in smaller towns offers greater cost-efficiency and faster returns, making them ideal for midscale and budget hotel brands aiming for high occupancy with sustainable margins. Leisure travel too is witnessing a surge. The growing popularity of spiritual, heritage and offbeat destinations is drawing tourists to smaller towns. From solo retreats in the hills to cultural experiences in historic towns, experiential travel is driving occupancy in non-metro markets. Moreover, these cities are increasingly hosting MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) events, weddings and even sports tournaments, further boosting demand for quality hospitality infrastructure.

The younger generation of travellers, particularly millennials, are shaping new

travel preferences. They value experiences over extravagance, seeking out boutique stays, wellness resorts and eco-conscious properties — trends that align well with what smaller cities have to offer. There is also growing potential for outbound tourism from tier-II and tier-III cities, necessitating better hospitality infrastructure within these towns to meet rising expectations. The future of Indian hospitality is not confined to metros alone. Tier-II and tier-III cities are brimming with potential. With targeted investment, localised strategies and a focus on quality and service, hospitality stakeholders can unlock long-term value while contributing to balanced regional development. ▢





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Rise of smaller cities is not just a phase: **HRAEI**

“

The significant shift towards tier II and III cities accounted for nearly half of all hotel transactions.”



SUDESH PODDAR
President
HRAEI

The hospitality landscape in India is no longer confined to a few major metros. The decentralisation of travel, combined with the democratisation of hospitality access, is creating fertile ground for long-term growth across India's tier II, III and IV cities.

As hotel operators look to diversify portfolios, tap new demand pools and build resilience through a pan-India presence, the rise of smaller cities is not just a phase — it marks a decisive evolution in India's hospitality ecosystem.

These emerging destinations, ranging from Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Siliguri, Digha, Nagpur and Dehradun to Surat, Raipur, Udaipur, Indore, and Coimbatore, are witnessing a surge in hotel development, brand signings and operational focus, powered by increased domestic travel, improved connectivity and a growing appetite for quality accommodation across non-metro India.

The shift in geographic strategy is clearly reflected in recent market data. According to the HVS ANAROCK Monitor (May 2025), a combined 73.3 per cent of all hotel signings by keys in the January–April 2025 period were located in tier II (31.6 per cent), tier III and IV cities (41.7 per cent). This is a significant increase over the same period last year and marks a definitive departure from the traditional tier I concentration that once domi-

nated India's hospitality investment pipeline. This robust performance, as reported by real estate agency JLL's latest analysis, signals a strong recovery and expanding footprint for the industry across the subcontinent. 2024 saw approximately 25 deals, primarily involving operational properties in both business and leisure destinations.

What is particularly noteworthy is the significant shift towards tier II and III cities, which accounted for nearly half of all hotel transactions. This trend has effectively broadened the industry's reach, bringing quality accommodations to previously underserved markets such as Amritsar, Mathura, Bikaner and several others.

In the year 2024, investor diversity was a key feature of investment landscape. High-net-worth individuals, family offices and private hotel owners led the charge, contributing 51 per cent of the transaction volume. Listed hotel companies followed closely at 34 per cent, while owner-operators and real estate developers made smaller but significant contributions at 8 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. ▣



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Beyond banquets

Amid intensifying competition, hotels are elevating weddings beyond traditional banquets to deliver highly personalised, memorable experiences.



Lipla Negi

Weddings have emerged as high-dopamine social media content, with every detail — from dance to décor — engineered for maximum visibility and impact. The spotlight now extends beyond the couple to the host hotel, intensifying competitive pressure. Hotels are being driven to curate weddings that are more holistic, hyper-personalised

and aligned with global benchmarks in cuisine and design.

What was once a single-day celebration is now a multi-event production, demanding diverse settings and backdrops within the same property. This shift is compelling hotels to reimagine spatial design, innovate service delivery and position themselves as destination-wedding leaders to secure market share and brand prestige. “Guests today are seeking experiences that go beyond rituals they want storytelling, cultural con-

nection and a sense of place. At Taj Hotels in Goa, we are witnessing a definitive shift from conventional ballroom-centric weddings to immersive, multi-sensory celebrations that reflect the couple’s unique narrative,” said **Mausam Bhattacharjee**, Commercial Director IHCL Goa.

Reimagining spaces

As new-age couples push the envelope, hotels are reimagining wedding celebrations beyond the traditional banquet. Some are transforming





pool decks and open gardens into vibrant venues for *mehendi* or *haldi* ceremonies, while others are re-designing banquet halls into expansive, pillarless spaces for larger-than-life celebrations. “We have curated new-age formats such as poolside *phas* under the stars, sunset beach vows and garden *mehfils* in restored heritage courtyards,” shared Bhattacharjee. Private beach alcoves become mandap stages; terraces are turned into romantic lounges with live saxophone and tapas bars; and even the spa decks now host intimate *haldi* ceremonies. “By moving away from the predictable and embracing the contextual charm of each location, we help craft weddings that are as unique as the couples themselves,” he added.

As couples no longer want a one-size-fits-all template, hotels are seeing formats shift from traditional ballroom-only celebrations to diverse, experience-led affairs across poolside decks, lawns and lounges. “At Hilton Manyata, we have hosted everything from sundowner *phas* with soft acoustic music to *haldi* brunches styled like vibrant local markets,” said **Manish Garg**, Gener-



MAUSAM BHATTACHARJEE

Commercial Director
IHCL Goa

“A definitive shift from conventional ballroom-centric weddings to immersive, multi-sensory celebrations.”

al Manager, Hilton & Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park. Wedding Diaries by Hilton, a signature platform, blends creativity with expert execution. “It is not just about planning logistics, it is about creating a visual and emotional narrative the couple can call their own,” he added.

Multi-venue strategy

Activating intimate venues like terraces and poolside decks transforms pre- and post-wedding moments into distinctive, personalised and profitable experiences. The reimaged wedding canvas unlocks both experiential value and revenue potential. “The terrace has become a favourite for sundowner cocktails, bridal welcome dinners or post-wedding brunches. These events typically command higher per-capita spends, especially when paired with live counters, artisanal bar menus or thematic décor. Strategically, it allows us to drive additional F&B revenue and extend the guest’s on-property journey across multiple days,” explained Garg.

Hotels are trying to project themselves as a one-stop-shop for wedding couples to make the entire journey of a wedding seamless. “We have introduced bundled destination packages, seasonal privileges for early bookings and curated planning toolkits that simplify decision-



MANISH GARG

General Manager, Hilton & Hilton
Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy
Manyata Business Park

“By co-creating wedding journeys end-to-end, we enhance both guest satisfaction & revenue.”

making. Through Tata Neu, couples and their families earn benefits across stays, shopping, flights and other experiences not just during the wedding but long after, as part of their shared journey,” said Bhattacharjee.

This multi-venue strategy not only increases the total event value per wedding but also optimises use



ANIMESH KUMAR

Head of Commercial,
ibis & ibis Styles India

“Modern couples are all about making their weddings a genuine reflection of their personalities.”

across dayparts — turning what was once a one-evening celebration into a 2-3 day curated experience. “With Wedding Diaries by Hilton, our in-house team and ambassador co-create these journeys end-to-end, enhancing both guest satisfaction and revenue per booking. Ultimately, it is about maximising what we have — not just in terms of space, but in terms of emotion and memory-making,” added Garg.

Storytelling in spotlight

Today’s couples are experience-driven, gravitating toward hyper-personalised celebrations where every detail reflects their story. From photo albums to social media reels, they often have their wedding narrative envisioned well in advance. “Modern couples are all about making their weddings a genuine reflection of their personalities, hoping every little detail tells their unique story. Here at ibis Styles Goa Vagator, we have collaborated with families to develop themes that beautifully blend the lively spirit of Goa with the couple’s personal journey. This can show up



in custom decor inspired by local art, menus that highlight regional flavours or charming welcome baskets packed with the couple's favourite goodies," explained **Animesh Kumar**, Head of Commercial at ibis & ibis Styles India. According to him, guests also demand an experience that should appear curated end-to-end. "Be it a panoramic open-air wedding ceremony, a yoga brunch beforehand or Goan local touches carefully integrated into the flow of the event," he added.

A rising number of couples seek weddings that are story-rich and sensory-led. Personalisation comes to the fore, where the hotel team works hand in hand with the couple to spotlight and celebrate their story. "We focus on highly personalised details — from decor inspired by regional arts like *Channapatna* to handwritten welcome notes and locally rooted F&B concepts," shared Garg. In fact, the brand has introduced a Hilton



Wedding Diaries Ambassador who partners with every couple to ideate and execute their vision. "Whether it is a *sangeet* with modern South Indian fusion decor, a bespoke menu that brings together Andhra and Italian influences or guest activities like DIY perfumery bars or wellness lounges, we ensure each event is a reflection of

the couple's story," he added. Adding to it, Bhattacharjee said, "Our marketing strategy also leverages visual storytelling, bringing real weddings hosted at our resorts to life across digital platforms, thereby inspiring future couples with what is possible when traditional hospitality meets modern imagination." ■

An advertisement for Sp Sweet Stevia Drink Mix by Herbveda. The background is a soft-focus green and yellow. In the center, a large box of 'Refresh Naturally Live Fresh So Sweet Stevia Drink Mix' is displayed. The box is white with green and orange accents. It features the Herbveda logo and several circular icons: 'NO SIDE EFFECTS', 'DIABETIC FRIENDLY', 'SUGAR FREE', 'ZERO CALORIES', 'KETO FRIENDLY', and '100% NATURAL'. Below the box, two smaller boxes of 'Stevia Lemon Drink Mix' and 'Stevia Orange Drink Mix' are shown, along with two glasses of the respective drinks. A small orange badge in the top left corner says 'JUST 2 CALORIES PER SERVING'. At the bottom, the website 'www.sp Sweet.co.in' and contact information are listed.



How luxury weddings are a big boon for hospitality

With increasing demand for grand, unique and immersive experiences, India's luxury wedding market is proving to be a major windfall for hoteliers.



Somya Deep

In India, weddings have traditionally been grand, opulent affairs, curated with love, cultural customs and warm hospitality. However, these events are evolving dramatically, with increased demand for bespoke services, lavish decor and high-end venues, driven by a growing affluent population and the influence of globalisation. With a larger-than-life approach, today's

couples seek unmatched luxury and scale, redefining the conventional wedding practices.

As ultra-luxury celebrations take centre stage in the Indian wedding landscape, there is a significant opportunity for the hospitality industry to unlock new revenue streams across various domains. Thus, hotels are now shifting their focus to dole out high-end services that align with the evolving preferences and tastes of new-age couples. Sharing his perspective on the changing scenario,

Manoj Jangid, General Manager, Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata, said that the trend of ultra-luxury weddings, once synonymous with leisure and offbeat destinations like Udaipur, Jaipur, or Goa, is now evolving. He said, "We are seeing a clear shift where families are opting for city hotels that offer the same grandeur, with the added advantage of convenience, connectivity and streamlined planning. This shift is driven by the need for better accessibility for guests, logistical ease and a more

**RAJEEV JAIN**

Founder & Director
Rashi Entertainment

**DR JK MOHANTY,**

MHCIMA, CMD
Swosti Group

“Couples expect Instagram-ready celebrations, including choreographed entries and custom culinary creation.”

“The budget of ultra-luxury weddings typically ranges between ₹1.5 crore to ₹5 crore, depending on the scale.”

personalised experience — all without compromising on luxury.”

Decoding budget

The budget for a luxury wedding can vary based on several factors, including the couple's wedding goals, scale, location, catering and guest count. The budget can increase significantly for ultra-luxury weddings. **Dr JK Mohanty**, MHCIMA, CMD, Swosti Group, shared that ultra luxury weddings at their properties typically range between ₹1.5 to ₹5 crore. He added, “These events include curated cuisine, decor, entertainment and royal hospitality, making them nothing short of a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the couple.”

Pitching his take on the current budget for ultra-luxury weddings, **Rajib Roy Choudhury**, Associate Vice President, Vedic Village Spa Resort, added, “According to our analysis, the average budget for ultra-luxe weddings has increased by 20 per cent in the past two years, driven by the growing demand

for bespoke experiences and high-end services.”

Nevertheless, the cost for a luxury wedding tends to vary across different cities. In metropolitan cities like Delhi and Mumbai, wedding expenses are generally higher compared to those in tier-II cities. Jangid affirmed,

“In the Kolkata market, a well-curated luxury wedding at a premium hotel can typically range between ₹50,000 to ₹60,000 per guest, inclusive of stay, food and decor. These figures reflect the growing appetite for curated, city-based weddings that deliver both luxury and ease.”



**RAJIB ROY CHOUDHURY**Associate Vice President
Vedic Village Spa Resort**MANOJ JANGID**General Manager
Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata

Ayurveda detox for our high-end clients. We also offer exclusive private events, such as pre-wedding parties, rehearsal dinners and post-wedding brunches, that are tailored to new-age couples' needs."

Drivers of luxury weddings

As traditions become grander with emphasis on luxury, personalisation and trendy rituals, the demand for luxury weddings hits new highs. Mohanty explained, "The demand is driven by social media influence, rising disposable incomes and the desire for once-in-a-lifetime curated experiences. People are prioritising quality, exclusivity and personalisation over scale." He also highlighted that destination weddings in culturally rich yet less-commercialised locales like Odisha offer both charm and privacy, making them appealing to couples seeking something beyond the typical wedding circuit.

Jain shared an interesting perspective, "In India, we often say that we only truly splurge twice in life — when building a home and when celebrating our children's weddings." Today, the demand for ultra-luxury weddings is soaring. Personalisation has become central — weddings now reflect individual

"The average budget for ultra-luxe weddings has increased by 20 per cent in the past two years."

Bespoke services

As the demand for personalised services surge, hotel brands are on their toes to roll out innovative experiences tailored to each client's expectations. From personalised menus curated by chefs and live traditional art performances to royal welcome ceremonies, Mohanty underscored, "We also offer dedicated wedding planners, tailored gifting and valet services. Our venues can be transformed for various rituals, ensuring that every element reflects the couple's vision and personal story in the most luxurious way possible."

According to **Rajeev Jain**, Founder & Director, Rashi Entertainment, they focus on designing custom-themed decor that reflects each couple's unique style, arranging performances by renowned artists and one-of-a-kind entertainment acts. Besides, they manage every guest detail from travel logistics to warm on-site hospitality.

Having successfully executed over 40 customised wedding setups in the past year, Choudhury said

"A well-curated luxury wedding at a premium hotel can typically range between ₹50,000 to ₹60,000 per guest."

that the themes range from Bengali to royal and nature-inspired setups, adding "We provide pre-wedding spa rituals, couple therapies and



love stories through themes, décor, cuisine and experiences.

Future ahead

With the sustained and growing demand for luxury weddings, Jangid foresees a promising outlook for city hotels in the coming year. He highlighted how the evolving mindset of modern couples is reshaping the luxury wedding landscape, driving its increasing popularity. "Couples today are inspired by visual storytelling and want their celebrations to be aesthetically rich and memorable for their social media. Additionally, the rise of dual-income families, greater spending power and the influence of global wedding trends are fuelling aspirations."

Echoing the same observation of the luxury wedding market, Choudhury anticipates a significant surge in demand for luxury weddings, driven by desire for unique and personalised experiences, rising ap-



peal of destination weddings and the growing importance of online presence. "We plan to capitalise on this trend through targeted marketing efforts, including wedding magazine features, collaborations with

event planners and participation in wedding roadshows. By offering bespoke services and experiences, we aim to capture a larger share of the growing luxury wedding market," he shared. □

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The sound of hospitality

Radiowalla brings mood-mapped music curation to hospitality environment, creating immersive audio identities for hotels, resorts and wellness destinations.



Lipla Negi

In hospitality, music is not just background; it is the heartbeat of the experience. Music breathes spirit into every space, be it the lobby, spa, bar or elevator, helping each zone build its own identity and impact. When thoughtfully curated, it enhances brand value, creates emotional connections and often secures a 'favourite spot' in the guest's memory reservoir—gently nudging them to return.

While most hotels invest heavily in aesthetics and service, music was often an overlooked part of the guest experience. Closing this gap—one tune at a time, Radiowalla offers



CA HARVINDERJIT SINGH BHATIA
CEO & Co-Founder,
Radiowalla Network

cost-effective, fully licensed music solutions including a rich library of independent artist content. These solutions enable properties to elevate their ambience while staying compliant and stress-free from music licensing complications. "At Radiowalla, we create bespoke music experiences aligned with the brand ethos, guest profile and space design," shared CA Harvinderjit Singh Bhatia, CEO & Co-Founder, Radiowalla Network.

Tuning in touchpoints

The idea behind Radiowalla was born from a simple yet powerful observation that sound can transform spaces and influence behaviour. "Our curation process starts with understanding the brand personality, guest demographics and the intended vibe of each area within the property," he explained. The curated playlists enhance the guest journey across touchpoints.

With proprietary audio and exclusive music-playing software, Radiowalla empowers hotels to seam-

lessly manage and customise music across multiple locations. "Our solution is highly flexible. It supports both dedicated hardware-based playback as well as cloud streaming, giving hotels the freedom to choose the most suitable delivery method based on their infrastructure," he stated.

Immersive experience

To enhance the audio experience, Radiowalla now offers digital screens and video content management powered by the cloud-based technology. This unified solution allows hoteliers to partner with a single provider for both audio and visual content needs, enabling them to engage guests seamlessly and non-intrusively.

Whether it is scheduling festive playlists, running in-property audio campaigns or ensuring mood-based music across zones, the platform offers centralised control and real-time updates. "Radiowalla ensures a consistent, immersive and fully compliant audio experience that builds stronger brand affinity," he asserted. □

Our curation process is shaped by the brand personality, guest demographics and the intended vibe of area

Legacy, linen & loom

With over 80 years of expertise in luxury linens, Premier Fine Linens is doubling down on what sets it apart — traceability from farm to finished sheet.



Lipla Negi

At a time when many players only operate a sewing unit—sourcing fabric and materials from various vendors — Premier Fine Linens is one of the rare few that owns the entire process. From sourcing the cotton to spinning, weaving, finishing, and stitching, every step is managed in-house. This level of end-to-end control ensures not just consistent quality but full transparency — an increasingly critical factor for global hotel chains and discerning buyers.

A decade ago, bed linen was often an afterthought in hospitality — sourced from any available vendor, with little scrutiny. But the landscape has shifted dramatically. Today, hotels are far more discerning, with sharp focus not just on quality and price, but also on reliability, sustain-

ability, and brand alignment. “Over the last ten years, we have seen a 360-degree transformation in how bed linen is perceived. What was once a utilitarian purchase is now a branded asset that reflects a hotel’s values and guest promise,” explained **Shanthi Srinivasan**, MD, Premier Fine Linens.

Larger hotel chains are leading the way, placing increased emphasis on sustainability and circular practices, while boutique properties and luxury homestays are also demanding high-quality linen that aligns with their eco-conscious and design-forward positioning. “Even the growing number of Airbnbs and short-stay accommodations are driving demand for differentiated textile solutions—be it in design, material or durability,” she added.

Nowadays, bed linens are considered as a strategic component of guest experience and brand storytell-



SHANTHI SRINIVASAN

Managing Director
Premier Fine Linens

“What was once a utilitarian purchase is now a branded asset that reflects a hotel’s values and guest promise.”

ing — often featured in marketing visuals, sustainability commitments, and even guest reviews. “The best is not always the highest thread count — what matters is the quality of the yarn and how it is woven. Our team works closely with hotels to understand their exact expectations and then designs bespoke products accordingly. With in-house jacquard looms and embroidery capabilities, we offer everything from custom logos to embroidered duvet covers and pillows — delivering a complete, personalised linen package,” she explained. 



The power of ventilation

Did you know poor ventilation in the kitchen can lead to high attrition in the staff? **Anmol Prabhu** explains how smart systems improve air, efficiency & retention.



DDP Bureau

Kitchens are the powerhouse of any hotel or restaurant across the world. Aptly considered more than a place that feeds guests, kitchens can build a brand reputation. The smoother the kitchen operations, the stronger brand value a hotel commands. Modern kitchens at any reputed, accredited hotel exhibit a perfect blend of human creativity and technological advancement. The demand for smart tech is driving brands in this segment to innovate and solve challenges in the kitchen space.

Airflow science

One of the most prominent issues in kitchens is kitchen ventilation. If not attended, it can lead to high attrition in the staff due to poor thermal comfort in the kitchen. Kitchen ventilation requires understanding air dynamics and fume filtration. "Generally, due to cost-cutting, the chimneys i.e. exhaust hoods are made in a

tapered shape, resulting to poor suction and unhealthy kitchen environment. ASHRAE standard 154 helps in understanding the design intent for kitchen ventilation. SMACNA helps in providing the right guidelines for HVAC duct route and design to ensure the kitchen ventilation is well designed," explained **Anmol Prabhu**, Chief Marketing Officer, Chefmate Technologies.

Raising standards

A well-designed hood guarantees the fume extraction is done at an optimum rate of air movement. "By using demand-controlled kitchen ventilation, the system can help in reducing the required load by ensuring the exhaust and fresh air are catered to the actual demand and not the designed demand," he stated.

As a responsible brand, Chefmate Technologies is committed to improving ventilation standards and creating better working conditions for the staff. Their continuous support to the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-aCondi-



ANMOL PRABHU

Chief Marketing Officer,
Chefmate Technologies

"Hotel owners can ensure the exhaust hood being supplied follows ASHRAE 154 standards and is ASTM F1704 compliant."



tioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and the Indian Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ISHRAE) helps the stakeholders bridge the gap between international standards and local design requirements. "Hotel owners can ensure the exhaust hood being supplied follows ASHRAE 154 standards and is ASTM F1704 (American Society for Testing and Materials) compliant, which will confirm their kitchens are designed for better performance," he assured. He added that demand-controlled kitchen ventilation optimises energy usage across kitchen systems and provides data that supports the ESG team in effective documentation and sustainability reporting. □

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radissonhotels.com/en-us/experience/weddings

Unlocking new horizons in HoReCa experiences

With its inclusive ethos and global outlook, IHE 2025 provides a dynamic platform for suppliers to connect with buyers and showcase game-changing products.



Lipla Negi

The 8th edition of the India International Hospitality Expo (IHE 2025), held at the India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida, this month witnessed a stellar gathering of industry leaders, policymakers, exhibitors, and hospitality professionals from across India and around the world. With the participation of over 1,000 leading brands and enormous product categories, IHE 2025 has firmly positioned itself as the single largest hospitality sourcing platform in India.

Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Chairman, India Exposition Mart, shared his

conviction in the transformative role of IHE 2025, describing it as 'a vibrant confluence where India's hospitality potential takes centre stage on the global map.' He emphasised that IHE is a movement that celebrates innovation, fosters international collaborations and reimagines growth across the HoReCa and hospitality sectors.

Over a span of four days, the event offered a diverse showcase across categories, including Food and Beverage, Hospitality Technology, Cleaning and Hygiene, Kitchen Equipment, Furnishings, Textiles, Operating Supplies, Wellness Products and more. Notable highlights include the Master Bakers Chal-

lenge India 2025, Junior Pastry Indian Cup 2025, Agropure Culinary League, Zero Proof Cocktail Challenge, Housekeepers Conclave 3.0 and Campus2Startup 1.0. This edition also marked a notable increase in international participation from various countries, facilitating greater B2B exchange, knowledge sharing and partnership opportunities.

Stakeholders capitalised on the opportunity to engage with decision makers from across India, exchanging insights on how rising domestic and international travel is driving industry trends and product demand. Here are key conversations with leading industry players on the evolving business of hospitality.





KARAN KHANNA

Director, Eclipse India (American Bedding Company)

Globally, the mattress market is dominated by American companies, who remain pioneers in the hotel segment. To compete, we focus on introducing cutting-edge technologies that appeal to hotels seeking innovation and freshness. Our latest product, the Royal Grand, features titanium-based pocket springs with a plush pillow top—an industry-first in India and among the newest global technologies, launched in the US just last year. It offers an unprecedented spring count of 3,500 compared to the usual 900, delivering exceptional comfort. The design also ensures unmatched edge support — capable of withstanding 200–300 kg on the corners without bulging or sliding—solving a common challenge with thicker mattresses. We have brought this breakthrough to India to set new benchmarks in hotel comfort.

AJAY KHANNA

Partner & CEO, Eagle Forgings

Our core portfolio remains focused on essential guestroom products. Each product is updated to the latest designs and specifications yet remains rooted in traditional hospitality needs — items that guests are familiar with in their own homes and expect to find in a well-equipped hotel. We travel extensively globally, attending major trade fairs and partnering with leading European companies specialising in guestroom equipment. We have developed a complete portfolio of international-standard, certified, guest-friendly products that match what international travellers were accustomed to. Our first breakthrough was the noiseless, long-lasting minibar with no moving parts, which replaced domestic models. For the past 38 years, we have remained one of the leaders in this specialised field.



VINOD KHATRI

National Manager – Contract Sales, Sealy India



Last year, we set up a factory in Hyderabad, allowing us to produce everything in-house, including our proprietary technology. We design and fine-tune the specifications after fully understanding the requirements of every hotel. One of our standout innovations is the Posturetech Coil, which senses weight and responds accordingly. This coil, combined with our unique edge support system, ensures proper spinal alignment and skeletal support. As a result, muscles relax and you wake up refreshed, knowing you have had a truly restorative night's sleep. That is what Sealy Posturepedic stands for — a perfect blend of comfort architecture and patented spring technology, backed by 140 years of expertise.

A leader in the bedding industry, Sealy Posturepedic has created benchmarks by focussing on the importance of correct back support and its painstaking research has ensured that the guests get comfort, support and happier sleep-time hours.

Every Sealy Posturepedic mattress is engineered to provide orthopedically correct support with Sense & Respond Posturetech Coil, built with exquisite craftsmanship and timeless aesthetic appeal. Most bedding companies produce generic pocket spring mattresses but Sealy Posturepedic differs to a large extent with numerous unique patented technologies at the core of our products.


MAYANK SHARMA,

Business Head - Hospitality (Premium Segment), King Koil

Great hospitality is remembered not only for service but for the quality of rest it provides. In the premium segment, the promise remains uncompromising luxury; in the budget segment, the future lies in smart, space-optimised solutions for evolving guest needs. Business travellers, in particular, demand restorative sleep, making innovation in mattress design a business imperative.

At King Koil, we craft customised mattresses for every category, budget, business, premium, resort, boutique and suite rooms, aligning with brand vision and guest expectations. From advanced sleep-grade foam and body sink foam to memory foam and organic latex, every material is chosen for comfort, durability, and performance. Our hybrid designs cater to every sleep style, ensuring that across all segments, guests experience a rest worth returning for.

SEEMA KHURANA

Owner, Venus Industries

Demand always depends on the client's specific requirements — hotel needs differ from restaurants, cafeterias or banquets. We serve all these sectors, including catering. In catering, gold and rose gold finishes are in high demand, while luxury hotels prefer more subtle, wood-based designs. Government clients, on the other hand, often choose silver; we have worked on projects for the new Parliament, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force. The hospitality industry in India is expanding rapidly, with more hotels, restaurants and cafeterias opening every year. Earlier, we did not work in furniture, but now we supply banquetting furniture, hotel furniture and customised counters for bar areas. We also handle complete fit-outs for army messes and interiors, including wall panelling. Our expertise spans both domestic and export markets.


RUPESH SRIVASTAVA

CEO, Therapeutic USA



We work directly under the guidance of our US-based principal company, Therapeutic International. All research and development is carried out in the US, and we replicate that technology and expertise in India. Most raw materials are sourced as per their specifications, and we use the same technology that they use in the US. At the same time, we also develop India-centric products to cater to local preferences, much like adapting a global menu item for regional tastes. Indian customers often look for price-sensitive options, but even in this segment, we never compromise on quality. For example, in our basic hospitality range, we produce foam-encased mattresses that meet international standards in both design and technology.

Our premium products follow American standards exactly and we regularly update our portfolio. Recently, we upgraded our hybrid mattress by switching from knitted fabric to damask fabric and enhancing it with a generous layer of high-quality memory foam. Unlike many other brands that use minimal memory foam with springs, we use the full, specified quantity, along with the purest PU foam above pocketed springs. This approach ensures our mattresses meet true international standards, with no compromise on quality or technology. ▣

Celebrating India's culinary trailblazers

The 4th Food Connoisseurs India Awards 2025 recognises outstanding culinary innovation in the HoReCa sector, presenting over 250 prestigious awards.



DDP Bureau

The 4th national edition of the Food Connoisseurs India Awards 2025, an initiative by Industry Live, presented by Tribe Kombucha was held on 31 July in Delhi. Supported by FHRAI, the event brought together gastronomic visionaries, industry leaders and hospitality innovators. The event was enlivened by Medusa Beverages as the 'Celebration Partner'.

This landmark event was co-powered by Rhythm Natural Mineral Water as the 'Hydration Partner,' ZEE Business as the 'Telecast Partner' and Radio City India as the 'Radio Partner'.

Strengthening the industry's collaborative spirit, 'Supporting Associations' of the event included Indian Culinary Forum, Tea Coffee Association, All India Food Processors' Association (AIFPA) and India Food Tourism Organisation. In addition, the warmth of gifting was brought to life by Gramiyaa, Toffee Doodle and Bee Celebration as 'Gift Partners.'



Honouring culinary excellence and innovation in the HoReCa sector, the prestigious Food Connoisseurs India Awards witnessed a F&B star-studded evening where close to 250 awards were presented to recognise the best in the industry amidst 800+ industry leaders.

A few of the acclaimed award recipients—Tim Hortons India

The event brought together gastronomic visionaries, industry leaders and hospitality innovators, reinforcing a spirit of collaboration

received a prestigious award for the 'Best Café of the Year-INDIA,' Cornell for the 'Emerging Food Tech of the Year,' International School of Culinary Arts, New Delhi for the 'Best Culinary School of the Year,' Jars N' More for the 'Best Newcomer Café – North,' and OG by the Lake for 'Best Newcomer Restaurant (East).' Besides, AsianKatha-Tales of Taste received the award for "Emerging Restaurant Serving the Best Pan-Asian Cuisine." □



Holidaymakers get drenched in monsoon travel

India's monsoon season is opening up lucrative opportunities for travel businesses, enticing travellers with targeted packages & deals to offset revenue dips.

 **Somya Deep**

The monsoon season is often dismissed as a 'off-period' for the hospitality industry, with a decline in occupancy and revenue. Nevertheless, the travel industry is witnessing a shift away from conventional tourist destinations, with travellers increasingly seeking out lesser known, nature-rich and soulful destinations. They now embrace the season as a favourable time to satiate their quest for sensory and immersive experiences, from wellness retreats to rejuvenate amidst

the calming rain to culinary journeys to savour regional delicacies.

To tap into this growing trend, airlines and hotels are sweetening their deals with attractive monsoon sales, making it easier than ever to explore destinations often ignored during peak travel season. These value-driven deals are encouraging travellers to explore off-season get-aways, fuelled by cheaper rates and fewer crowds.

According to Airbnb's latest travel insights, some of the top trending monsoon destinations include Indore, South Goa, Coimbatore, East Khasi Hills, Udaipur, Kottayam and



Leh, each offering a unique blend of culture, nature and tranquillity.

Short retreats

Travellers today prioritise slow and short trips to engage with nature and sensory-rich moments. Illuminating how people travel in India during monsoon, **Vibhas Prasad**, Director, Leisure Hotels, said, "Most travellers prefer short-haul destinations within driving distance from major metros. Road trips become popular due to the lush scenery and flexibility. Preferences tilt towards nature-centric locations like hills, riversides and forest retreats."

Seeking moments for self-reflection and connection with nature that the season offers, **Rajat Sethi**, Cluster General Manager, Fairmont & Raffles Jaipur, pointed out that the traveller's focus now shift to scenic settings, slower itineraries and experiences that blend nature with indoor comfort, making monsoon an appealing time for those seeking tranquillity and thoughtful hospitality.





VIBHAS PRASAD
Director
Leisure Hotels

“Most travellers prefer short-haul destinations and nature-centric locations like hills, riversides and forest retreats.”



RAJAT SETHI
Cluster General Manager
Fairmont & Raffles Jaipur

“The visitor turnout remains steady, ensuring consistent operations and engagement throughout this time.”

According to **Arindam C Bahel**, General Manager, Operations, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, couples and solo travellers often opt for weekend road trips from nearby cities, while families prefer longer stays with indoor recreation. He highlighted, “Guests generally look for cozy accommodations, hot beverages and fewer crowds. The preference leans towards relaxation, nature exploration and immersive, slow-paced holidays that allow them to unwind amid the rain-soaked landscapes.”

Steady revenue

There are several reasons why visitor numbers might dip during the monsoon season, primarily due to safety concerns from travellers. However, numbers often remain steady as many travellers are drawn to the rain-washed landscapes and the peaceful atmosphere. Sethi revealed, “Although the numbers are somewhat lower compared to peak months, the visitor turnout remains steady, ensuring consistent opera-



tions and engagement throughout this time.”

Prasad agreed that guest arrivals during monsoon months remain stable with a marginal rise at select properties. He explained the reason behind the rise, “Travellers now view monsoon as an opportunity for off-beat, crowd-free getaways. Short getaways, spontaneous trips and working holidays have all contributed to consistent occupancy levels during this period. Destinations such as Rishikesh, Nainital, Kasauli and Bhimtal particularly benefit, as guests seek mindful escapes and tranquillity.”

Monsoon-centric packages

To stay ahead of evolving travel trends and guest expectations, hotels are continually refining their offerings from immersive wellness

retreats to curated culinary journeys and attractive seasonal discounts. Prasad shared, “With our ‘My Magical Monsoon’ package, guests can enjoy discounted stays, a complimentary daily buffet breakfast, and a delightful Hi-Tea featuring regional favourites like chai, pakoras, samosas and roasted bhutta.” Across their properties, experiences are thoughtfully designed such as rejuvenating spa rituals, live entertainment and culturally themed performances. Adding to the seasonal charm are destination-specific experiences that celebrate the spirit of the monsoon.

The Fern Hotels & Resorts is making the best of it with monsoon packages, including special discounted room rates, complimentary high tea with snacks, guided nature walks, and indoor entertainment like board



ARINDAM C BAHEL

General Manager, Operations,
The Fern Hotels & Resorts,

“Guests prefer nature exploration and slow-paced holidays that allow them to unwind amid the rain-soaked landscapes.”

games and live singing. Bahel said, “Guests also enjoy welcome drinks and early check-in or late check-out options, subject to availability. These packages are crafted to let guests experience the serene beauty of the hills during the rains.”

Seasonal marketing tactics

To share the seasonal charm of monsoon with a wider audience, hotels craft a thoughtful blend of digital and offline marketing strategy. Every season exudes unique characteristics, Prasad reckoned, “We utilise evocative storytelling across social media, email campaigns, influencer partnerships and guest loyalty programmes to highlight the monsoon enchantment.”

Fairmont & Raffles Jaipur’s marketing strategy focused on digital campaigns and OTA visibility. Sethi noted, “June is targeted towards families, while later months highlight scenic escapes and experiential stays for couples and drive-in travellers looking for short breaks.” □



A vibrant blend of business and leisure

As Hyderabad emerges as a global city, **Shubhankar Bose** says Sheraton goes beyond the traditional hotel experiences delivering world-class hospitality with the local warmth.



DDP Bureau

Hyderabad is fast emerging as one of India's most vibrant business and cultural destinations, and at the heart of this transformation is the Financial District. Located in the city's thriving IT and commercial hub, this neighbourhood is becoming a magnet for global companies.

Industry sources indicate that over 25 new star hotels and resorts are expected to open in the next six to seven years, particularly across high-growth zones such as IT corridor, Shamshabad Airport Road and Genome Valley. These developments are set to add over 5,000 rooms by 2032, reinforcing Hyderabad's stature as a global city.

Strategic location

At the forefront of this evolution is Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel, strate-

gically located in Nanakramguda, the neighbourhood of Financial District. Surrounded by major corporate offices, including Amazon and Microsoft, the hotel blends business convenience with leisure comforts. "Hyderabad is no longer just a city of pearls; it has evolved into a global destination for business and world-class hospitality," said **Subhankar Bose**, General Manager, Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel. "Our location puts us right at the intersection of corporate energy and cultural richness."

Under his guidance, Sheraton Hyderabad has grown beyond the traditional idea of a hotel. "We have carefully curated experiences from wellness-focused club facilities and our award-winning Pan-Asian restaurant Zega to curated local excursions that bring Hyderabad's vibrant heritage to life."

Striking a balance

Known for driving innovation with



SUBHANKAR BOSE

General Manager
Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel

"Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel today stands as a symbol of the city's evolving identity."

empathy, Bose's leadership has also placed strong emphasis on community connection, sustainability and guest-centric digital transformation. .

He highlighted that as Financial District continues its upward trajectory, Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel today stands as a symbol of the city's evolving identity, where global sophistication meets the warmth of local hospitality. □





Indians on AI:

A mix of excitement & caution

Booking.com highlights Indian consumers are enthusiastic about AI's potential in travel but skepticism remains a barrier to completely trusting AI.



DDP Bureau

Booking.com's Global AI Sentiment Report revealed that 99 per cent of Indian consumers express excitement about AI, 96 per cent are familiar

with the technology, and 98 per cent want to use AI in their future travel plans. Based on insights gathered from over 37,000 consumers across 33 markets, the report delved into how people are using, trusting and responding to AI in everyday life and travel.

Sentiment breakdown

The report identified distinct segments among consumers based on how they feel about AI: 46 per cent of Indian respondents are AI enthusiasts, intrigued by AI's potential, while 28 per cent are AI advocates, championing its benefits and respon-



classify themselves as AI cautious and 4 per cent as AI skeptics. Notably, 10 per cent as AI detractors, signaling a meaningful segment resistant to AI adoption.

Assistance over autonomy

AI has become deeply integrated into the daily life of Indians. Yet, the lack of a human touch generates doubts. 99 per cent of Indian consumers use AI-powered search, 96 per cent using streaming recommendations and an equal percentage engage with generative AI tools.

38 per cent find AI impersonal but they double-check AI outputs even when they trust the technology. Only 16 per cent of consumers fully trust AI.

This hesitation creates a clear boundary—most Indians are not ready to cede in full decision-making to AI. The greatest opportunity lies in positioning AI as a supportive tool that enhances, rather than replaces, human judgment.

AI's advancing role in travel

AI is rapidly becoming a core part of the Indian travel experience, with 69 per cent of Indian consumers expect-

ing autonomous trip planning to go mainstream in the near future. There is a growing reliance on AI-powered tools and Indians' openness to technology that enhances their journeys.

The majority (87 per cent) have already used AI in some aspects of travel and nearly all have turned to it for planning or booking or while already on a trip (99 per cent). When planning a trip, 53 per cent of Indian travellers most often use AI to re-search destinations and the best time to visit, 44 per cent for finding local experiences or cultural activities. In addition, AI assistants emerge as a more trusted source for planning travel (45 per cent), than colleagues (23 per cent) or influencers (31 per cent). **Santosh Kumar**, Regional Manager, South Asia at Booking.com, said, "Generative AI represents one of the most significant technological shifts of our era, fundamentally reshaping how consumers engage with the world around them. In India, people are not just curious about generative AI but are actively using it as a trusted co-pilot, shaping travel decisions and enabling memorable experiences. The opportunity ahead is tremendous." □

sible adoption. This enthusiasm is based in the belief that AI will make life easier (87 per cent), save time and effort (65 per cent), expand learning opportunities (64 per cent) and enhance productivity (54 per cent).

However, this excitement also comes with significant caution. While 99 per cent of Indian consumers express enthusiasm for AI, 5 per cent

"69 per cent of Indian consumers expect autonomous trip planning to go mainstream in the near future."



Products & Services



◀ Smart digital signage

The Interactive Digital Signage by Romio Technologies is the perfect blend of style and smart technology. It features 180° rotation with support for both vertical and horizontal orientations, powered by an inbuilt 15000mAh battery. It runs on Android 12.8, making it suitable for videos, images, Google Meet, OTT apps and digital menus. Additionally, the device is lightweight and movable, equipped with an HD display, camera, speaker, 4GB RAM and 64GB memory.

Elegance meets charm ▶

Heritage Armchair by Prerna Mohan Design Studio is a statement piece that blends classic design with whimsical charm. It comes with safari-print upholstery, hand-turned wooden legs and plush cushioning, making it perfect for any elegant space. The dimensions of the armchair are 665 mm x 750 mm x 750 mm (W x D x H).



◀ Outdoor decking solution

SPAN FLOORS has introduced 'Vulcan Wood Decking,' an advanced outdoor decking solution. More than just visually stunning, the product is engineered to be resistant to termites and wood-boring insects, a critical feature for Indian outdoor environments. The solution is crafted from sustainably harvested Radiata Pine sourced from New Zealand. It undergoes a thermal modification and OPX treatment for moisture resistance, dimensional stability and longevity.



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Movements



Anurag Bharadwaj
General Manager,
Fortune Ranjit Vihar, Amritsar

Fortune Hotels has appointed Anurag Bharadwaj as General Manager of Fortune Ranjit Vihar, Amritsar. In his new role, Bharadwaj will oversee operations, focusing on driving the property's growth and overall business performance. With 15 years of experience, he has a proven track record in managing premium hospitality properties.



Bharathi Perumal
General Manager
Hilton Garden Inn Trivandrum

Muthoot Pappachan Group, ownership group of Hilton Garden Inn Trivandrum, has designated Bharathi Perumal as General Manager of the hotel. He will be responsible for hotel operations, including guest services and satisfaction and hotel administration, in addition to overseeing marketing efforts.



Shranoth Suresh
Director of Sales, Renaissance
Bengaluru Race Course Hotel

Shranoth Suresh has been appointed as the Director of Sales of Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel. With experience in sales strategy, business development and client relationship management, Suresh's dynamic leadership style is expected to further elevate the hotel's positioning in central Bengaluru.



Malabika Das
Director of Celebrations, Hyatt
Regency Dehradun Resort & Spa

Malabika Das has joined Hyatt Regency Dehradun Resort and Spa as the Director of Celebrations. She brings years of expertise in high-end resorts and multicultural celebrations. By fostering strong relationships with vendors, operational precision and embracing the rich culture of the region, she aims to elevate wedding offerings..



Sakshi Upadhyay
Assistant Director of Sales
Hyatt Regency Pune & Residences

Hyatt Regency Pune & Residences has appointed Sakshi Upadhyay as the Assistant Director of Sales. Upadhyay rejoins the hotel's team to enhance strategic sales initiatives across key business segments. She will be focusing on expanding the property's corporate portfolio and strengthening client engagement.



Deepak Rawat
Head Chef
Fairfield by Marriott Jaipur

Fairfield by Marriott Jaipur has appointed Deepak Rawat as the new Head Chef. Equipped with 15 years across premium hospitality brands in India and Thailand, his appointment is aligned with the hotel's vision to deliver elevated dining experiences and enrich the culinary landscape with authentic flavours.

CORRIGENDUM

In our July edition (Volume 7, page 31), the article on Satyen Jain, CEO, Pride Hotels Group, inadvertently carried the profile of SP Jain, Chairman and MD, Pride Hotels Group. The error is regretted.

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