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## HOSPITALITY HIGHWIRE DR JYOTSNA SURI

Vows, Value and Wedding Windfall



# President's Note



### Dear Members and Stakeholders,

n an era marked by transformative change, FHRAI remains steadfast in its mission to be a proactive catalyst for growth and development in India's hospitality sector. While actively engaged in policy advocacy efforts on numerous issues concerning the tourism and hospitality sector, the federation is also taking a lead in shaping the industry's voice around sustainability, employability, skilling and the tourism sector's growth and innovation.

I am happy to inform our members that the last Executive Committee Meeting of FHRAI, held on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at Kevadia in Gujarat, has decided to organise the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of FHRAI from 12 to 14 September 2025 in Bengaluru. The three-day event is expected to be the largest business and networking platform for the tourism and hospitality industry in India this year. This landmark event will bring together thought leaders, policymakers and industry stakeholders to explore emerging trends, tackle pressing challenges and shape the future of hospitality in India.

In our pursuit to create a more conducive environment for the growth of the sector in the country, we have recently submitted a representation advocating for the re-classification of hotels rated 3-star and above under the 'Green Category' within the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) classification system. This proposal, designed to foster a more sustainable and practical compliance framework for environmentally conscious hotels, was submitted to the Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change (GoI) and the Chairman, CPCB.

The Ministry of Ayush, in collaboration with the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY), has recognised FHRAI once again by choosing the federation to lead key initiatives for the International Day of Yoga (IDY) 2025. This partnership underscores our sector's vital role in aligning with India's cultural and spiritual narrative on the global stage.

Building on this momentum, FHRAI has been entrusted with two flagship initiatives for IDY 2025, both reflecting the visionary leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister. These include the 100-Day Countdown Programme scheduled for 10 May 2025, in Goa, and the



"The 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of FHRAI will be held from 12 to 14 September 2025 in Bengaluru, expected to be the largest business platform for tourism."

series Harit Yoga signature events. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025, FHRAI initiated the Harit Yoga series with a rejuvenating yoga retreat at the Atmantan Wellness Centre in the tranquil hills of Mulshi, Maharashtra. On 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025, tree plantation and yoga retreat were organised at FHRAI-IHM, Greater Noida to nurture wellness among future hospitality leaders.

Each of these initiatives reflects FHRAI's unwavering commitment to being a dynamic, pre-eminent voice for our industry—one that bridges tradition with innovation and advocacy with meaningful action. As we continue this journey, I urge all our members to stay engaged, contribute ideas and collaborate in shaping a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future for Indian hospitality.

> Warm regards, **K Syama Raju** President, FHRAI

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### Green category status for 3-star above hotels

FHRAI appeals CPCB to reassess hotel branding under red or orange categories despite low environmental impact.



### Championing wellness with yoga for members

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# Secure service charge for labour welfare

To ensure workforce development, FHRAI seeks remedial measures to address service charge removal that could harm staff retention.



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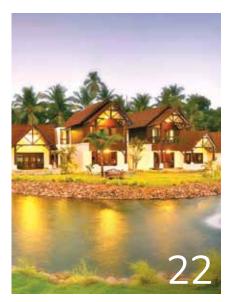
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# Green category status for 3-star above hotels

FHRAI appeals CPCB to reassess hotel branding under red or orange categories despite low environmental impact.



HRAI has flagged serious concerns to Bhupender Yadav, Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change, (MoEF&CC), Government of India and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister for Tourism, Government of India, highlighting the current CPCB classification of hotels, particularly 3-star rated and above or with more than 100 rooms, under the red and orange categories. The hotel body stressed many of these establishments operate with minimal environmental impact, utilising cleaner fuels and technologies.

The association appealed for recategorisation of hotels (3-star and above) under the 'Green Category' in CPCB Classification. The letter stated, "India's hotel industry, especially branded and higher-category hotels, has consistently demonstrated leadership in adopting sustainable practices. Most of the establishments have voluntarily embedded Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) principles into their core operations."

#### **Major challenges**

The classification of hotels under the red or orange category has resulted in several challenges for the industry. FHRAI brought forth the following factors:

**Increased regulatory burden:** Hotels under the red or orange category face more stringent monitoring, reporting and compliance requirements, often disproportionate to their actual pollution levels.



Classification of hotels under the red or orange category poses many challenges for the industry **Operational delays:** It necessitates clearances that cause delays in project approvals and operational renewal. It impacts the ease and process of doing business.

**Investor hesitancy:** Categorisation under a high-pollution bracket discourages investment prospects due to perceived environmental risks, which can significantly increase cost of compliance. **Contradictory objectives**: The Ministry of Tourism promotes environmentally sustainable tourism, however, the current classification does not help in incentivising hotels that have proactively invested in green certifications.

**Reputational risk:** Labelling wellperforming, sustainable hotels under the "red" category can negatively affect brand image, especially among



international guests who are increasingly environment conscious.

#### **Key focus areas**

FHRAI requested the following aspects to offset industry setbacks.

# **Re-categorisation of hotels**: Environmentally compliant hotels (3-star and above or more than 100 rooms)

operating on clean energy and adhering to green building standards may kindly be considered under the green category, in alignment with their actual environmental footprint.

#### Differentiated classification frame-

**work**: A more granular framework that recognises the efforts of hotels with sustainability practices would help incentivise the adoption of clean technologies and drive sector-wide transformation.

Meanwhile, FHRAI has also approached **Dr. Ravindra Pratap Singh**, Chairman, Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board, Lucknow, to intensify their demand for recategorisation of hotels (3-star and above). Seeking their intervention with recommendation to CPCB, FH-RAI underscored the need of reclassification of 3-star and above hotels to green category, while taking cognisance of their sustainable practices and green initiative.

To justify their move, the association highlighted notable initiatives undertaken by the hotel industry:

#### **Energy efficiency measures**

- Deployment of LED lighting with motion sensors
- Installation of energy-efficient HVAC systems and equipment
- Use of building management system (BMS) for optimal energy utilisation
- Adoption of renewable energy sources (e.g., solar panels, solar water heating systems)

#### Waste water management

- Usage of water-efficient fixtures across guest rooms & public areas
- In-house sewage treatment plants (STPs) to reuse treated water for non-potable applications
- Implementation of rainwater

A balanced approach is essential to support India's environmental goals without stifling the hospitality sector

harvesting and grey water recycling systems

• Smart irrigation systems to reduce water consumption

#### Waste management & recycling

- Biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste management
- Authorised partnerships for recycling of e-waste and hazardous waste

- Technology-enabled food waste management
- Reduction in single use plastic

#### Green building certifications

Adoption of LEED, IGBC and GRI-HA certification standards, ensuring global best practices in sustainability. The association stated, "We reiterate our shared commitment to environmental protection. However, we also appeal for a balanced approach that supports India's environmental goals without stifling hospitality sector."

Meanwhile, FHRAI has also written to **Dr. Arun Kumar Saxena**, State Minister (Independent Charge), EF & CC Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh and **Amandeep Garg**, IAS and Chairman, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), MoEF&CC, Government of India.







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# Championing wellness with yoga for members

Observing International Day of Yoga, FHRAI hosts 'Harit Yoga' reinforcing close bond between personal well-being and ecological health.



HRAI, in collaboration with the FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management (FHRAI-IHM), hosted 'Harit Yoga–A Signature Event' as part of the International Day of Yoga 2025 celebrations. Supported by the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, the event brought together students, hospitality professionals and wellness advocates, emphasising yoga as a powerful tool for harmony, peace and environmental consciousness.

The session was led by expert trainers from Mokshayatan Yog Sansthan, Noida, including Yogacharya **Mukta Sharma** and Yogacharya **Divya Sharma**, with support from Yogi **Vaibhav**, Yogi **Rahul**, Yogini **Nikki** and Yogini **Kavita**.

As part of this year's theme, "Harit Yoga: Embrace Nature, Embrace Peace," saplings were distributed to participants by SC Suneja and Dr Narendra Kumar,



symbolising a collective commitment to environmental stewardship. The gathering commenced with the Common Yoga Protocol and was followed by a series of curated yoga practices, breathing exercises and guided



Yoga should not only be taken as a physical discipline but as a holistic way of life

meditation. Each session aimed to highlight yoga not just as a physical discipline but as a holistic way of life that cultivates mindfulness, balance and a deeper connection with nature.

Jaison Chacko, Secretary General, FHRAI, said, "As an association representing the hospitality industry, we believe our spaces should do more than just serve. They should support healing, reflection, and balance. Planting a tree or taking a mindful breath is a real act of connection with the world. That is what true hospitality means to us."





# **Countdown starts for International Yoga Day**

Showcasing collaborative strength of tourism & wellness, FHRAI & HRAWI observe Yoga Mahotsav as part of 100-day countdown to International Day of Yoga.



HRAI jointly with HRAWI successfully organised a Yoga Mahotsav at Radisson Blu Resort, Cavelossim Beach, Goa. This celebration marked the 42<sup>nd</sup> day of the 100-day countdown to the International Day of Yoga. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 350 representatives from the wellness, tourism and hospitality sectors.

Delivering the welcome address, Vishal Pathak, Corporate General Manager, Radisson Blu Resort, said, "Goa's natural beauty and serene environment make it an ideal destination for wellness and yoga tourism. We take pride in supporting such initiatives that promote holistic well-being while enhancing tourism in Goa."

**Deepak Narvekar**, Deputy General Manager, Marketing (Hotels) and PRO, Goa Tourism Development Corporation, stated, "We prioritise wellness and yoga in Goa's tourism offerings. Yoga and wellness not only enrich the tourist experience but also open new avenues for the hospitality industry. Today's event

"Yoga and wellness not only enrich the tourist experience but also open new avenues for the hospitality industry."

successfully connects the yoga and hospitality sectors." The event featured a live demonstration of the 'Common Yoga Protocol' led by **Dr. Joy Pereira**, MD (Ph D), a Master Yoga Trainer accredited by the Ministry of AYUSH. Dr. Pereira not only demonstrated the practices but also explained their health benefits, which were actively followed by attendees.

**Dr. Sneha Bhagwat**, CEO & Executive Director, Goa College of Physiotherapy, Naturopathy and Yogic Sciences, added, "Yoga is not just a physical discipline but a way of life that promotes mental clarity, inner strength and balance. Adopting yoga can bring about transformative positive change in our lives."

**Dr. Mickey Mehta**, Chairman and Managing Director, Healdhee – 360° Holistic Health Healing, said, "The active participation of Goans in today's event reflects the region's growing interest in wellness. Yoga elevates consciousness and strengthens our immunity. It is an eternal science that balances the body, mind, and soul."





# Skill-building initiatives to drive job opportunities



Reaffirming its commitment to inclusive employment, FHRAI and DSLSA aim to empower legal services beneficiaries through vocational training.



HRAI has partnered with the Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLSA) in a transformative initiative titled 'Project Veerangna.' Conceptualised and implemented by DSLSA, it aimed at empowering legal services beneficiaries through vocational training and employment opportunities.

Held in New Delhi, the job mela and placement drive was a significant step in the rehabilitation of individuals by offering them avenues for dignified livelihoods. As a key industry partner, FHRAI facilitated the involvement of the hospitality sector, ensuring the candidates were exposed not only to theoretical knowledge but also to the practical



K SYAMA RAJU President FHRAI

nuances of working in hospitality. Participants received training through IHM PUSA, New Delhi, one of the country's premier hospitality institutes. **K Syama Raju**, President, FHRAI, said, "The hospitality sector has long been a vehicle for inclusive growth and upward mobility. Our association with Project Veerangna is a reflection of our belief in second chances and the transformative power of skillbuilding. FHRAI will continue to champion such initiatives that bring hope, dignity and sustainable livelihood to those who need it most."

The event also featured a certificate distribution ceremony recognising the successful completion of training by the participants. The highlight of the event was the

"Our association with Project Veerangna is a reflection of our belief in second chances."

issuance of 19 Letters of Intent to selected candidates by industry partners, marking the beginning of their professional journey in the hospitality industry.

The placement drive saw active participation from leading hospitality organisations, including Lemon Tree Hotels, ITC Hotels, Par Anand Charitable Trust (PACT), Chhanav Foundation and The Lalit Hotels.





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# Secure service charge for labour welfare

To ensure workforce development, FHRAI seeks remedial measures to address pressing issue of service charge removal that could harm staff retention.



n a letter to **Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya**, Hon'ble Minister of Labour and Employment, Government of India, FHRAI made an appeal for the protection of service charge practices and recognition of service charge as a labour welfare instrument in the hospitality sector.

FHRAI also sought government support in taking remedial measures to safeguard the welfare of workforce. The association highlighted some pertinent points on the importance of levying a service charge within the hospitality industry.

**Significance of service charge:** It is a long-standing, globally recognised practice. It is a pre-disclosed component clearly indicated on menus and bills and is contractually agreed upon by patrons who voluntarily choose to avail of services. Unlike arbitrary tipping, the service charge is equitably distributed among the staff—including servers, chefs, cleaners and support team, serving as a structured and reliable mechanism for supplemental compensation.



Integral part of the business: It is an amount that is added to customer's bill in a restaurant to pay for the services of the persons who are involved in serving the food on the table. It is a solicitation of a nominal additional charge for providing a delightful and memorable experience to the customers. However, the service charge does not determine the quality of service being rendered to the customer by the restaurant.

**Retention of workers:** The service charge collected from the customers is paid to the service and kitchen staff at restaurants and hotels, over and above their remuneration. It acts as an incentive and additional income to the workers to meet the continued increase in the cost of living.

**Payment made for a social cause:** Majority of the establishments who levy service charges make a con-







scious choice to put that in the bill as a separate charge to clearly disclose to the customer that a specified portion of the amount paid by them is being given to the staff of the establishment.

Ensuring personalised services: There is a vast difference between services offered by quick service restauraants (QSRs) and fine dining restaurants. QSRs are self-service restaurants, wherein customers have to order and collect the food themselves. Whereas fine dining restaurants provide personalised services to their customers from the moment they enter the restaurant. Fine dining restaurants put in their best efforts in every service. A nominal service charge is levied on the total bill against a special dining experience.

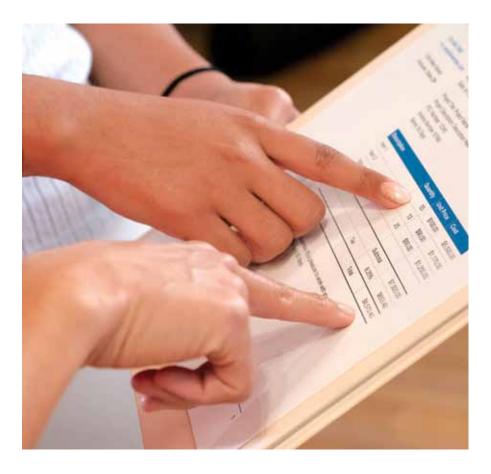
**Impact of no service charge:** The prohibition of service charge has led to a significant reduction in staff income, particularly affecting junior and frontline workers who heavily rely on this component as part of their overall remuneration. The move has disrupted existing employment contracts, destabilised wage structures and dismantled performance-

based incentive systems that were integral to staff motivation. The overall quality of service has also suffered due to the absence of a structured mechanism to reward employees. "Service charge is a transparent, predisclosed component clearly indicated on menus and bills."

Besides, the association highlighted that there are other compulsory charges/fees levied by other operators/businesses, however, they are not questioned or subjected to any public bashing by the consumer activists or by any government machinery.

FHRAI has put forth such practices that are prevalent in other sectors:

- The airlines earlier never charged for seat selection but now merely blocking a particular seat would also entail an additional charge.
- Convenience fee charged by ticket booking platforms, such as RCTC, Make My Trip and Yatra;
- Cab operators like Ola & Uber and payment gateways (Paytm) also charge convenience fees.





# **Reinvent food safety measures**

FHRAI requests FSSAI to renew its food safety standards and increase hospitality representation to boost awareness among stakeholders.



n a formal letter to **Dr. Satyen Kumar Panda**, Executive Director, Regulatory Compliance, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, Government of India, FHRAI has sought FSSAI's consideration on key industry suggestions on the food safety and standards regulations.

### Advisory on dairy analogues

The association requested to issue an advisory specifying the labelling and usage guidelines of dairy analogues for creating widespread awareness among all stakeholders.

#### FAQ on water testing rules

There exist a lot of confusion about the testing water rules being used by the food business operators (FBOs), leading to unwanted disputes between the business operators and FS-SAI officials. The letter stated, "We request FSSAI to provide a FAQ on the water testing rules for clarifying all contentious issues."



Issue an advisory specifying the labelling and usage guidelines of dairy analogues



The letter emphasised that the hospitality industry has the maximum licenses and registrations but the sector is not duly represented in the important committees of FSSAI such as CAC and Science Committee. The association also pointed out that contributions of the hospitality industry, seeking to consider providing representation to the Apex Industry Body in the CAC and Science Committee.

### **Regular meetings**

FHRAI highlighted that FSSAI should ensure that district and statelevel steering committee meetings are convened with proper notice periods defined by the authority with the apex hospitality association as part of the committee to bring positive compliance-based issues to the forum. The association also expressed to share minutes of meeting of all these meetings in a summarised form once in a quarter, which is convened under HQ FSSAI or Regional HQ.

Notably, FSSAI's virtual meetings with food business operators help in addressing a lot of challenges faced by them in their daily operations.







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# **People, Power & Purpose:** Lalit Group gets future ready

From talent retention to eco-sensitive design, **Dr Jyotsna Suri** emphasises significance of inclusive and resilient hospitality to address industry-specific challenges.



very industry faces its own set of challenges, and the hospitality industry is no different.
Fluctuating guest trends, global crises, talent migration, high development and operating

costs and the misuse of social media are some of the more prominent issues we regularly navigate. Each of these factors requires us to stay agile, forward-looking and deeply committed to the core principles that define hospitality. Over the decades, I have learned that patience and resilience are two of our greatest assets in overcoming these hurdles.

#### **People-centric approach**

One of the most pressing issues is workforce retention. Hospitality is a peoplecentric business, and that makes the quality of our team non-negotiable. However, the demands of the industry—long hours, emotional labour and high-pressure environments, often lead to fatigue and burnout. At The Lalit, we have taken conscious steps to address this through a holistic approach. We prioritise mental wellness, enforce fair workplace policies and create continuous learning opportunities that help our teams



**DR. JYOTSNA SURI** Chairperson & Managing Director The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group

grow both personally and professionally. These are not just support systems—they are strategic tools to retain and nurture talent for the long term. We listen to our people, we recognise their contributions and we invest in their potential because in a business where people serve people, our workforce is truly our greatest asset and the cornerstone of everything we do.



#### Green ethos

Sustainability in operations is another critical challenge. Today, it is no longer a choice but a responsibility. Rising costs and the growing urgency of climate change compel us to completely rethink how we design, build and operate our hotels. From comprehensive energy audits and intelligent resource management systems to eco-sensitive architecture and green design principles, we have made environmentally conscious decisions across every aspect of our operations.

Regulatory unpredictability, especially in the wake of COVID-19, has also posed challenges. We have navigated these through strong industry associations, poliOur approach has been to use technology as an enabler, not a replacement. Challenges will continue to emerge, and we will have to continue to overcome them by being grounded in values, led by people and powered by purpose.

#### Road ahead

The way forward is not without complexity, but it is also rich with possibility. By staying anchored to our purpose, we are confident in our ability to help shape a future for Indian hospitality that is not only future-ready but also deeply human. In every challenge, we see an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to sustainable, resilient and inclusive hospitality.

### **Catalyst for** Change

Dr Jyotsna Suri has been associated with Bharat Hotels since its inception. In 2006, she took on the mantle of Chairperson & Managing Director. Under her stewardship, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group became one of the leading privatelyowned domestic hotel brands in India, with a focus on the luxury segment.

"Our approach has been to use technology as an enabler, not a replacement."

cy dialogue and robust scenario planning. Collaboration has been key, both within our group and with external stakeholders.

#### **Tech impacts**

Digital transition, while empowering, can alienate the human side of service. Technology has certainly transformed the guest journey, from booking to feedback, but it also runs the risk of alienating the very essence of our industry: the human touch.





### **Rationalise & reduce excise fees**

In meeting with new excise commissioner, HRANI team pushes for more inclusive and industry-sensitive approach in future excise policymaking.

DDP Bureau

HRANI

delegation from the HRA-NI, led by **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, HRANI and Vice President, FHRAI, along with **Garish Oberoi**, Treasurer, HRANI and **Renu Thapliyal**, Secretary General, HRANI, recently met **Sunny K Singh**, IAS,

HRANI representatives urge for annual 10 per cent increase in excise fees the newly appointed Excise Commissioner of Delhi and the District Magistrate.

During the meeting, the HRANI representatives raised key concerns pertaining to the recent excise reforms and their implications for the hospitality industry. The issues discussed included the automatic annual 10 per cent increase in excise fees and a proposal to bring down the legal drinking age in Delhi from 25 to 21 years—bringing it in line with several other states.

The delegation also appealed for rationalisation and reduction of excise fees to align them with those in neighbouring regions, ensuring fairness and competitiveness. Addi-



tionally, they requested an extension of the excise fee payment deadline to 31<sup>st</sup> March. Besides matters related to excise policy, the team underlined the need for a more industry-sensitive approach in policymaking.

### Eateries in Ludhiana to stay open till 2 am

Providing much-needed relief for Ludhiana's hospitality sector, Commissionerate Police extends operating hours for eateries across the city.



n a significant development for Ludhiana's hospitality industry, the Commissionerate Police has extended the operating hours for eateries across the city. This move, which allows restaurants and bars to remain open until 2 am, fulfils a long-standing demand from the local

This move fulfils a long-standing demand from the local hospitality sector hospitality sector. Eateries holding excise licenses L-3, L-4, or L-5 can stay open until 3am, provided they adhere to the norms outlined in the Excise Policy.

The decision follows persistent

efforts by local eatery owners, who had been requesting the change for over a decade. Their demand was raised with Rajya Sabha MP **Sanjeev Arora**, who facilitated the resolution within just 10 days after the issue was brought to his attention, much to the appreciation of industry stakeholders.

Welcoming the move, Amarvir Singh, President, Hotel and Resort Association, Ludhiana; Hony Secretary, HRANI and EC Member, said, "It was our demand for over 10 years. We are grateful to MP Arora for resolving it within just 10 days."











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### HRAEI Bolstering food safety standards and compliance

HRAEI conducts FoSTaC training session in Guwahati, raising food safety awareness and setting new benchmarks for food safety standards.

DDP Bureau

RAEI successfully organised a Food Safety Supervisor Training in the Advance Catering (FoSTaC) programme in Guwahati recently. Held at Vivanta Guwahati, the programme was conducted under the leadership of its President **Sudesh Poddar** and Senior Vice President **Aneel Goenka**. The initiative aimed at enhancing food safety awareness and compliance among industry stakeholders in the region.

The training session was expertly conducted by Dr **Anup Kumar Tewari**, National Diamond Master Trainer, FoSTaC-FSSAI, who has successfully conducted over 200 training programmes across India. Dr. Tewari provided in-depth guidance on advanced food safety practices, covering critical areas such as hygiene management, food handling protocols, contamination prevention, and legal compliance, empowering participants with practical knowledge aligned with national and global standards.

Speaking about the programme, Poddar said, "We believe that training and certification are the foundations of a stronger, safer



"We are proud to contribute towards building a safer, more responsible hospitality environment in eastern India."

hospitality sector. It reflects our commitment to equipping industry professionals with the knowledge



SUDESH PODDAR President HRAEI

and best practices needed to meet evolving standards."

Talking on the sidelines of the programme, Goenka stated that the programme marks an important step towards setting a new benchmark for food safety standards in the region and strengthening Guwahati's position as a premier tourism and hospitality destination.





# FHRAI, CIRC partner to reinforce legal capacity in hospitality

In partnership with CIRC, FHRAI rolls out 'Navigating the Legal Landscape of Hospitality' eight-week course to raise legal awareness in hospitality.



### DDP Bureau

HRAI has signed an MoU with the CUTS Institute for Regulation & Competition (CIRC) to strengthen legal and compliance capacity across the hospitality sector. Spanning eight weeks, Navigating the Legal Landscape of Hospitality course will help hoteliers, restaurant owners, HR professionals, legal advisors, entrepreneurs and hospitality students. It covers essential topics, including licensing, contract law, labour regulations, intellectual property, taxation and dispute resolution.

**K** Shyama Raju, President, FH-RAI, stated, "Today, understanding of the law is not just an advantage—it is a necessity in the hospitality industry. With laws constantly evolving, compliance demands growing and customers expecting more, it is crucial for hospitality professionals to understand the legal systems that impact their day-to-day work."

India's tourism and hospitality sector holds immense potential, with projected revenues exceeding ©5.12 lakh crore (US\$59 billion) by 2028. However, startups and smaller enterprises struggle to navigate a complex web of regulatory requirements

"Understanding of the law is not just an advantage—it is a necessity in the hospitality industry." involving multiple licenses, labour laws and compliance mandates.

**Pradeep Mehta**, Chairman, CIRC, said, "Strengthening legal awareness among hospitality professionals is essential to uphold consumer protection, ensure compliance and foster trust in an increasingly regulated service landscape." Mehta added, "When businesses are well-informed, they can plan proactively, avoid penalties, build investor confidence and align better with global standards— paving way for long-term growth."

FHRAI, meanwhile, urges professionals across hotels, restaurants, resorts, and allied services to take advantage of this opportunity. This initiative is not just about understanding legal frameworks—it is about building stronger, more credible institutions and ensuring long-term success.

## **Best practices of food safety**

Attended by 36 hospitality professionals, FoSTaC programme provides practical insights and skills to encourage high-level food safety measures.

🚽 DDP Bureau

HRAWI

he Hotel and Restaurant Association Western India (HRAWI), under the aegis of FSSAI, conducted its latest Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC), on April 15 at the Sun-N-Sand Hotel in Mumbai. The session, attended by 36 hospitality professionals, covered essential topics including food handling, hygiene, sanitation and waste management. Participants gained practical insights to strengthen food safety measures within their establishments, reinforcing best practices in the industry.



The event was inaugurated by **Dr Pasupathy V**, Trainer, Parikshan; **Nataraj Dabola**, Purchase Manager; **Dhiraj Kumar**, F & B Manager; **Abhijit Jadhav**, Pastry Chef and **Rajni Gohil**, Banquet Head, Sun-N-Sand Hotel.

HRAWI has successfully trained and certi"The programme covered key topics including food hygiene, sanitation & waste management"

fied 3,412 hospitality professionals through its FoSTaC training programmes. The association is committed to promoting a culture of food safety and equipping industry professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to uphold the highest standards in their daily operations.

# FIR against OYO affiliate for ₹3 crore fraud

Nashik-based hotelier accuses three directors of My Preferred Transformation and Hospitality of financial fraud within five months of lease agreement.



n a serious blow to Oyo's already embattled reputation, the Nashik Police has registered an FIR against its subsidiary for criminal breach of trust, forgery, financial

A complaint has been filed against Oyo subsidiary for criminal breach of trust, forgery and financial cheating cheating and deception totalling nearly ₹3 crore. The complaint has been filed by prominent Nashikbased hotelier **Samir Suresh Nahar** with the Ambad Police Station, naming three directors of My Preferred Transformation and Hospitality, the Oyo affiliate.

The FIR (Complaint Registration No. 277 of 2025) has been filed under multiple stringent sections including 316(2), 336(2), 336(3), 340(2) and 3(5), accusing directors **Rakeshkumar Prushti, Anuj Tejpal** and **Anurag Parikh** of orchestrating a calculated financial fraud.

The trio entered into a registered Leave and License Agreement for a five-year lease of Nahar's hotel— Hotel Suresh Plaza on 1 August 2019, at a monthly rental of ₹4.15 lakh plus GST. However, just five months into the agreement, in January 2020, the company stopped paying rent, dismissed hotel staff and ceased operations, leaving the hotel in a state of disrepair and abandoning all contractual obligations.





### **SIHRA** GRT Hotels launches online learning programme for hospitality

With its virtual learning initiative, GRT Hotels & Resorts aims to offer holistic educational content that will significantly benefit hospitality community.

🔶 DDP Bureau

RT Hotels & Resorts has launched, 'The GReaT Patashala,' a virtual learning YouTube channel aimed at enhancing hospitality training through bespoke standard operating procedure (SOP) videos. GRT Hotels initially developed the SOP videos for internal training, the initiative has now been expanded benefitting hotel management students, industry professionals and aspiring hospitality talent. This initiative marks a significant milestone, as GRT Hotels becomes one of the first hotel chains in India to offer such comprehensive educational content to the industry.

The launch event at Grand Chennai by GRT Hotels featured esteemed guests, including Venkatesan Dhat**tareyan**, Regional Director (South), India Tourism Chennai, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, who presided the event. It also featured a panel discussion, 'Basics and Emerging Trends of Hospitality Training.'

Besides, GRT Hotels & Resorts signed a memorandum of understanding with V-Sesh, a Chennaibased organisation dedicated to support differently abled individuals with suitable employment opportunities. This collaboration aimed to utilise 'The GReaT Patashala' channel to provide skill development and training programmes.

**Vikram Cotah**, CEO, GRT Hotels & Resorts, said, "Our vision for The GReaT Patashala extends beyond internal training. We aim to contribute positively to the broader hospitality community by sharing knowledge."

**Benny D Ezekiel**, Corporate Manager, Learning & Development,

GRT Hotels & Resorts and V-Sesh signed an MoU to support differently-abled individuals with suitable employment opportunities

GRT Hotels & Resorts, shared, "We felt the need for a unique learning experience for our staff, which will fortify the standards. In pursuit of weaning away from the conventional methods of training, we started using video."

The channel covers many topics, from SOPs on billing processes to guidelines for guests' pets.



		Q1 CY 2025		Q4 CY 2024	Q1 CY 2024
p P	ARR	9,400 – 9,600	ver	<b>†</b> 4 – 6%	<b>↑</b> 11 – 13%
	Occupancy	68 – 70%	Change Over	↑ 1-3 pp	<b>↑</b> 1 – 3 pp
	RevPAR	6,392 – 6,720	0	<b>†</b> 7 – 9%	<b>↑</b> 15 – 17%

Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year

# Bengaluru sees highest occupancy growth in Q1 2025

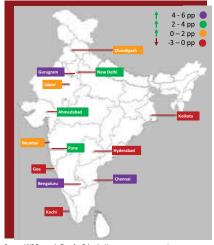
Despite mixed pattern overall, Bengaluru, Chennai and Gurugram are leading occupancy trends in key markets, reveals HVS Anarock.

🚽 DDP Bureau

s per the latest report of hotel trends by HVS Anarock, March 2025 marked a measured correction for the Indian hotel sector as performance eased month-on-month, following an exceptionally strong growth in February.

Occupancy Trends Across Key Indian Markets

(Year - on - Year Growth: March 2025)



Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year; pp – percentage points

### **Occupancy trends**

Occupancy growth trends in March 2025 showed a mixed pattern across major Indian markets. Bengaluru, Chennai and Gurugram stood out for their significant contributions to occupancy growth, emerging as the top gainers in year-on-year growth.

#### **ARR trends**

On the average rates front, almost all major hotel markets in India recorded strong year-on-year ARR growth. The report showed double-digit increases in 10 out of 13 cities. Hyderabad led the pack with remarkable market performance for the month, while Goa and Kolkata recorded a decline in rates.

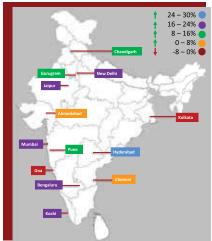
### Q1 2025

The Indian hotel sector recorded a

Mumbai retained its position with the highest occupancy in the range of 82-84 per cent

### **ARR Trends**

Across Key Indian Markets (Year -on-Year Growth: March 2025)



Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year

strong performance in Q1 CY2025 compared to the same period in 2024. All markets except Hyderabad recorded year-on-year occupancy growth, with the sharpest increases seen in Bengaluru. Barring Goa, all major markets recorded strong yearon-year growth in average rates during Q1 CY2025. Bengaluru recorded the highest year-on-year growth during the quarter.



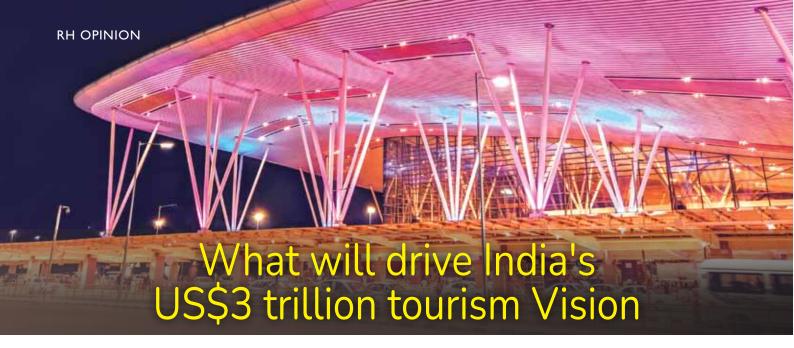
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India must adopt strategies ranging from policy interventions to sustainable infrastructure and strategic collaborations within industry.

## US\$3 tn tourism economy is achievable: HRANI

66



role in this process. It creates direct jobs in hotels, restaurants and travel services, and also supports many small businesses such as homestays and tour guides. Tourism and hospitality together rank among the largest sources of employment in India, contributing to nearly 12 per cent of total jobs. As travel becomes more accessible, especially after the pandemic, people from all income groups are now taking part in travel. This wider reach is opening new opportunities for individuals and businesses across the country.

Moreover, tourism is a major contributor to foreign exchange earnings and boosting India's global economic standing. With focused strategies in spiritual, wellness, eco and heritage tourism, we have the potential to significantly increase international footfall.

The government's commitment through initiatives like the PRASHAD and Swadesh Darshan schemes, connectivity improvements and infrastructure investments are already making a difference. However, for tourism to truly become a US\$3 trillion powerhouse by 2047, we need continued support through policy reforms, ease of doing business and adoption of sustainable practices.

s India moves towards its 100th year of independence, achieving a US\$3 trillion tourism economy by 2047 is not just aspirational-it is well within reach. With its deep integration across multiple sectors, tourism's potential to generate

President

employment, income and foreign exchange is unmatched. Tourism positively impacts almost every part of the economy. A single traveller supports a wide value chain-from hotels, restaurants and airlines to taxi services, artisans and local vendors. This seamless flow of economic activity not only enhances GDP but also brings direct benefits to communities, both in cities and rural areas. The hospitality industry also sector plays a key



The tourism and hospitality sector contributes to nearly 12 per cent of total jobs."

### Tourism as impetus for global soft power: HRAWI



# India can harness tourism not just as a revenue generator but as a catalyst for equitable development."

**JIMMY SHAW** President HRAWI

ndia's tourism sector stands at the cusp of a historic transformation. As the nation eyes its ambition to become a US\$3 trillion economy by 2047, tourism is poised to emerge as a linchpin of growth, employment and global soft power. Contributing over 10 per cent to India's GDP and supporting millions of jobs; the sector's potential remains vastly untapped. With strategic reforms, infrastructure investments and a renewed focus on sustainability, India can harness tourism not just as a revenue generator but as a catalyst for equitable development, cultural preservation and global influence.

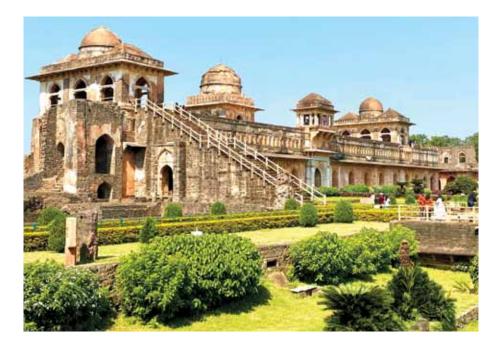
Tourism is one of the few sectors with a vast multiplier effect that fuels job creation, encourages entrepreneurship, drives infrastructure development and uplifts rural and underdeveloped regions. India's diverse cul-

tural, spiritual, natural and culinary wealth offers an unmatched value proposition that can attract millions more international travellers while deepening the domestic tourism movement. With sustained policy focus, India can become one of the top three global tourism economies. However, despite ranking 8<sup>th</sup> globally in travel and tourism GDP contribution (WTTC, 2023), India attracts just 1 per cent of the world's international tourists.

The G20 Tourism Working Group meetings, the launch of the 'Dekho Apna Desh' campaign and investments in new circuits like eco-tourism, adventure tourism, regenerative tourism and heritage trails are all strategic enablers. Additionally, the robust recovery postpandemic and record-breaking domestic tourist numbers across several travel destination states reaffirm the sector's resilience and untapped potential. Global travellers increasingly seek eco-conscious options, and India's US\$3 trillion goal must align with planetary boundaries.

To unlock this growth, however, we must address longstanding challenges including, rationalising the GST structure for hotels and restaurants, streamlining licenses through single-window clearances and enhancing air and rail connectivity across destinations. Moreover, building capacity through skilling programmes and incentivising hotel infrastructure in underserved regions will ensure balanced growth. The hospitality industry must also embrace innovation and sustainability. The future lies in integrating purpose with profit.

As we set our sights on 2047, tourism must be viewed not just as a sector but as a national economic asset. With the right policy push, investment incentives and industry collaboration, India can become a global benchmark in sustainable and inclusive tourism. The US\$ 3 trillion mark is not a dream, it is an opportunity, and our collective commitment will determine how successfully we turn it into reality.





## Prioritise infra growth in tier-II and III cities: SIHRA



Continued policy support, coupled with publicprivate partnerships, can accelerate growth."

**K SYAMA RAJU** President SIHRA

firmly believe that India's aspiration to evolve into a US\$3 trillion tourism economy by 2047 is both ambitious and attainable. Tourism, with its vast potential, stands as a cornerstone for economic growth, employment generation and cultural exchange.

India's rich tapestry of heritage, diverse landscapes and vibrant traditions offers travellers unparalleled experiences. However, to harness this potential fully, a concerted effort is required. Infrastructure development, especially in tier-II and tier-III cities, is paramount. Enhancing connectivity, ensuring cleanliness and providing quality accommodations will significantly boost tourist satisfaction and repeat visits.

The hospitality sector, being the face of tourism, plays a pivotal role. Investing in skill development and training programmes will ensure that our workforce meets global standards, offering services that resonate with international travellers. Moreover, embracing sustainable practices will not only preserve our natural and cultural assets but also appeal to environmentally conscious travellers. Additionaly, digital transformation is another avenue that can revolutionise our tourism sector. Leveraging technology for marketing, virtual tours and seamless booking experiences can position India as a modern and accessible destination. Besides, collaborations with global platforms and influencers, are crucial which can further amplify our reach.

Government initiatives, such as the Incredible India campaign and the introduction of e-visas, have already laid a strong foundation. Continued policy support, coupled with public-private partnerships, can accelerate growth and innovation in the sector.

The journey to a US\$3 trillion tourism economy is achievable with collective endeavour. Besides strategic planning, investment in infrastructure and human capital, the industry's commitment to sustainability is important, which can undoubtedly help India emerge as a global tourism powerhouse by 2047.





### Balance economic with ecological protection: HRAEI



The country's current travel and tourism model is unhinged and unsustainable."

SUDESH PODDAR President HRAEI

66\_\_\_

ndia is set to create a US\$3 trillion tourism GDP by 2047 through 100 million foreign tourist arrivals, 20 billion domestic tourism visits and more than 200 million direct and indirect tourism-driven jobs.

India is perhaps one of the very few countries that has already covered expansive strides in remodelling its tourism based on eco-friendliness, youth friendliness and sustainability. The introduction of the G20 Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals Dashboard act as a tremendous tool to keep the industry accountable and firm on its path towards achieving its sectoral goals by 2030.

The tourism sector has the potential to outshine all others as the Olympic flame blazing towards responsible and sustainable development despite its complex relationing the Paris Agreement (2015) and hold the global average temperature increase well below 2 degrees Celsius, and further limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius, then it is imperative to address sustainability challenges posed by the tourism industry.

The country's current travel and tourism model is unhinged and unsustainable as it leads to the generation of an estimated 5.2 gigatons (Gt) of carbon each year, accounting for 9 to 12 per cent of total global GHG emissions. To align the industry's impact positively in the direction of the Paris Agreement, emissions need to be reduced from 5.2 to 3.1 Gt of carbon emissions, to prevent the projected rise of 6.2 Gt.

Many of India's top hotels have not only embodied its pioneering concept of responsible luxury but also endorsed it to the world at large. Many of them are today LEED Platinum Certified, LEED Zero-Carbon Certified and LEED Zero-Water Certified. Some have met the UN 2030 sectoral targets by recycling or reusing more than 99 per cent of solid waste generated and meeting more than half of its electric consumption through renewable sources.

ship with the environment. However, the industry has its task cut out as it needs to strike a balance between economic development and ecological preservation. The Ministry of Tourism's unique initiative, 'Travel for Life' encourages sustainability in tourism, and this will accelerate hospitality and tourism businesses.

Various initiatives will be launched under Travel for LiFE, including TFL case study competition, a national TFL campaign for cleaning tourist sites and recognition of best practices in sustainable rural tourism. Anand said if countries are to fulfil their undersigned commitments adopted dur-







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### **Timeless bond of cinematic** charm and tourism

Carving its niche on global showbiz map, Ramoji Film City emerges as top pick, from corporate events to tourist exploration, with its large-scale infrastructure.



he juggernaut of South Indian movies across both Indian and global audiences is well-established. Known for its iconic characters, compelling screenplays, stunning visual effects and colossal sets, the industry has firmly placed India on the global showbiz map. At the heart of this cinematic revolution is Ramoji Film City—a name synonymous with the Indian cinema. It has served as the backdrop for over 3500 movies, including blockbuster epics like Baahubali: The Beginning, Baahubali 2: The Conclusion, Pushpa and RRR, among others.

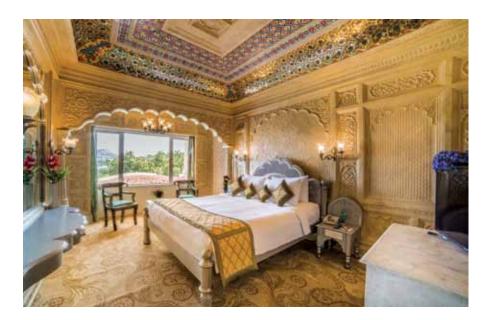
Envisaged as an integrated filmmaking studio by its founder Ramoji Rao, it has since evolved into one of India's most popular tourist destinations. "We discovered the incredible synergy between film and tourism as the industry evolved. The idea was to create a space where stories come alive—where guests can go home with memories as tangible as film reels," said **Vijayeswari Cherukuri**, Managing Director, Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad. Staying true to its original theme 'Come with a Script, Go with a Can', the destination offers immersive experiences for both cinema lovers and tourists alike.

#### Events in a cinematic universe

For film enthusiasts, the opportunity to walk through the sets of Baahubali, relive movie magic and witness behind-the-scenes attractions makes the film city a larger-than-life experience. But Ramoji Film City is not just



Managing Director, Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad



about cinema. It's versatility makes it a premier location for corporate events, weddings, product launches and school excursions, all uniquely designed with a cinematic twist.

The film city also has an adventure park, SAGA, considered among the best in Asia, tailored for experiential events. "Top brands such as Tata, Microsoft and HSBC have hosted their large-scale events here, citing the world-class infrastructure, creativity and hospitality as key differentiators," she said.

Recently, the Harley-Davidson South Chapter hosted an event at the film city for the third time. "The uniqueness of the experience keeps them coming back—something they rarely do with other venues," she affirmed.

For schoolchildren, Ramoji Film City offers specially curated twonight, three-day excursion packages. Every year, over 4 lakh students from schools and colleges visit it.

Carnival, culture & concerts The venue recently played host to a

Ramoji Film City is not just about cinema; its versatility makes it a premier location



live concert by Ed Sheeran, and upcoming months will see musical tributes to legends like Michael Jackson and S.P. Balasubrahmanyam. "These concerts especially attract the youth and middle-aged music lovers," she noted. It hosts carnivals every year, from the Festive Carnival during Dusshera and Deepawali to the Winter Carnival towards the end of December. "It's peak season for us during carnival days. We host 15000 visitors a day, and the highest has been 22,000 a day. Over 13 lakhs visitors visit the city on a yearly basis," she informed.

### Hospitality like no other

It offers multiple categories of accommodation, ranging from fourstar, three-star and two-star hotels to budget-friendly dormitories, collectively capable of hosting up to 1,600 guests per day. The brand wants to cater to all pocket sizes. Vijayeswari shared, "Our most affordable base category begins at just ₹700, designed especially for blue-collar workers as part of company incentives or recognition programmes. Many corporates now organise two-night incentive stays for their employees, making Ramoji a preferred one-time group travel destination."

Adding to the cinematic charm are uniquely themed suites named after iconic films like Mackenna's Gold, Cleopatra and Amrapali Gold, and Enter the Dragon.

### Art deco meets modern finesse

Rooted in Mumbai's iconic Art Deco heritage, Fairmont Mumbai captures city's enduring spirit while setting new benchmarks in modern luxury.



#### In such a competitive hospitality landscape, what will set Fairmont Mumbai apart from the rest?

Fairmont Mumbai makes its debut in the city's luxury hospitality landscape with a distinct voice and vision. While Mumbai is home to several iconic properties, our approach is centred on creating a meaningful emotional connection with our guests. Rooted in Fairmont's legacy of timeless elegance and a deep sense of place, the hotel brings together refined design, intuitive service and curated experiences that reflect both the soul of Mumbai and the sophistication of a global traveller. What truly sets us



**RAJIV KAPOOR** General Manager, Fairmont Mumbai

apart is the launch of Blu Xone—India's first integrated longevity zone at Fairmont Spa & Longevity. This pioneering wellness concept ushers



in a new era of vitality, where ancient traditions meet advanced therapies, positioning Fairmont Mumbai as a transformative destination for rejuvenation and longevity. We are not here to replicate what already exists but to redefine what luxury

### Given Mumbai's position as India's major commercial hub, what key strategies are you deploying to attract and retain corporate clientele?

hospitality means in the country.

Fairmont Mumbai has been thoughtfully designed for the modern business travellers, offering seamless arrivals, smart in-room technology and versatile meeting spaces tailored for both efficiency and discretion. Located right besides Chhatrapati





Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, the hotel ensures exceptional connectivity for both domestic and international executives. Fairmont Gold, our exclusive lounge and bespoke business amenities provide a refined setting for productivity and networking.

We are forging strategic partnerships with key corporates, offering tailored packages, loyalty privileges and long-stay solutions. Recognising the pace of corporate life, our wellness offering features advanced treatments such as cryotherapy and hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT), enabling guests to recharge, recover and return to peak performance.

Will you be focusing on distinctive experiences or competitive

### wedding packages to attract the wedding segment?

Weddings at Fairmont Mumbai are crafted as deeply personal exapressions—each one curated with precision, elegance and emotional resonance. Rather than offering a standardised format, we focus on storytelling, designing celebrations that reflect the couple's journey through bespoke culinary experi-

"Fairmont Gold, the exclusive lounge, provides refined setting for productivity & networking." ences, refined design and intuitive service. Our collection of elegant venues accommodates everything from intimate ceremonies to grand festivities, supported by seamless execution. What sets us apart is not just the setting, but how we transform it—creating immersive, meaningful moments that linger long after the celebration ends.

#### The decor of Fairmont Mumbai blends Art Deco with modern luxury. What inspired this design direction?

Mumbai's storied Art Deco legacy provided the perfect foundation for our design narrative. At Fairmont Mumbai, we have reinterpreted this iconic aesthetic through a modern lens—combining geometric symme-





try, bold lines and rich textures with contemporary finesse. The result is a space that feels both timeless and forward-thinking. Guests will discover layered design stories throughout the hotel-from handcrafted furniture and curated artwork to thoughtful detailing that nods to the city's

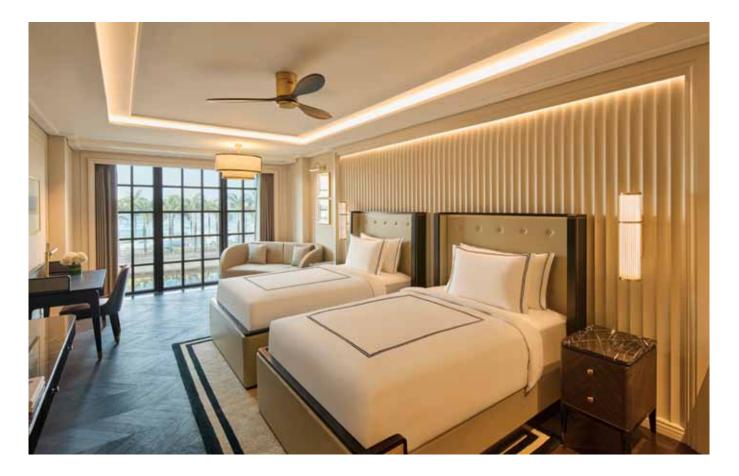
heritage. It is more than visual appeal-it is an evocative experience that celebrates beauty, memory and modern elegance.

Drawing from your successful journey in hospitality leadership, what key insights or strate-

### "More than visual appeal, Fairmont Mumbai is an evocative experience."

### gies do you plan to leverage to establish Fairmont Mumbai as a standout luxury destination?

Across my journey in hospitality, one truth has remained constant: it is people who define the soul of a hotel. I am committed to building a culture anchored in excellence and innovation. We are cultivating a passionate team that is empowered to deliver personalised, meaningful service at every touchpoint. Strategically, we are aligning operational precision with creativity, offering thoughtful collaborations, sustainability-led initiatives and immersive local programming. Our goal is not just to compete, but to lead by creating a property that reflects the Mumbai's spirit while setting new standards in contemporary luxury.





### All-in-one solution: Scaling op efficiency

**Razi Haider** says high-end combi oven helps streamline numerous tasks, enabling elimination of multiple appliances for diverse cooking needs.





### Tell us more about the 'Justa Core Combi' oven that you recently launched in India.

The Justa Core Combi is a highend combi oven from our factory in China, making its debut in India after successful launches in other countries. It is designed to handle multiple tasks, all-in-one compact unit. What is unique is its integrated boiler system, delivering premium performance at an economical price.

### What gap does this product address in the hospitality sector of India?

The hospitality industry is booming but kitchens today face two critical challenges—space constraints and labour shortages. The Justa Core Combi eliminates the need for multiple appliances—it is a single solution for diverse cooking needs. In addition, it bridges the gap between high performance and operational cost-effectiveness.



**RAZI HAIDER** Country Manager (India, Sri Lanka and Nepal) ITW India (FEG Division)

With the F&B sector expanding, we are introducing solutions that align with local needs

### How are you ensuring users adapt to this high-tech?

Training is key. We have onboarded a corporate chef who will conduct hands-on sessions. The focus is on maximising the oven's capabilities teaching them not just how to use it but how to innovate with it.

### Beyond metros, which markets are you prioritising?

Although metros continue to play a vital role, tier I and tier II cities are leading the growth. In the last three years, mid-tier cities, particularly in South India, have gained remarkable traction. Our current focus is on South India. We are now expanding into markets like Kerala and Coimbatore.

### Q: What is next for ITW India in this segment?

We have more launches in the pipeline and India is no longer a peripheral market. With F&B sector expanding rapidly, we are committed to introducing solutions that align with local needs.



# Sustainable policies to build economic resilience

Industry leaders discuss well-defined policy as need of hour to stem overtourism and encourage environmental preservation while boosting local economy.

### DDP Bureau

t a recently concluded event, 'Tourism Sustainability Summit 2025,' the third panel discussion focussed on the theme, 'Sustainable Tourism as a Policy Imperative—Lessons from Global Leaders.' **Dr Sanjana Jon**, Filmmaker & Philanthropist, wh, moderated the event and set the tone for an insightful discussion. Jon stated, "Tourism can play a significant role in helping countries achieve their objectives if they act responsibly within the policy frameworks."

### Shaping green policies

Tourism is a great opportunity to develop economic resilience for communities struggling with economic challenges. **Glenn Mandziuk**, CEO, World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (UK), said, "It is imperative to implement policies that encourage tourism in certain areas but not leading to over-tourism. This can affect the balance between growth and development."

Highlighting the importance of environment protection, **Mandziuk** pointed out that tourism can be a guardian of nature. It presents an economic opportunity as well as responsibility to take care of the destination that we operate. Therefore, tourism can play a major role in shaping policies for environment management.

Emphasising the need of a well-defined policy, **HE Fernando Bucheli**, Ambassador, Ecuador to India, said, "Tourists generate 10 per cent of GDP in the world. It is crucial for government to have an appropriate tourist policy. The absence of a proper policy can lead to loss of en-



**GLENN MANDZIUK** CEO, World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (UK)

"Develop economic resilience for communities struggling with economic challenge."



HE FERNANDO BUCHELI Ambassador Ecuador to India

"One cannot do tourism only for business without providing help to the local people."



vironment, heritage and culture. He also suggested that the government must focus on preservation of biodiversity, since its degradation can lead to destruction of income source. The tourism policy must support local economies. Bucheli emphasised, "One cannot do tourism only for business without helping the local people. The local community must be involved in all these programmes."

#### **Environmental protection**

Sharing his perspective on sustainable tourism, **HE Dr Shankar Prasad Sharma**, Ambassador of Nepal to India, "One approach that can strengthen sustainable tourism is to increase the retention of income in rural areas, which will enable local people to protect the environment." He stressed that Nepal has done extremely well in forest conservation, noting, "45 per cent of our total land is covered with forest and 24 per cent of land area is under a protection area. On the other hand,



HE DR SHANKAR PRASAD SHARMA Ambassador of Nepal to India

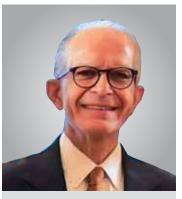
"Nepal has put restrictions on mountaineering by raising fee to address eco concerns." homestays are growing rapidly. By the year 2023, there were about 2,200 homestays registered with the government." To promote sustainability, Nepal has put restrictions on mountaineering by raising the fee to address environmental concerns.

Dr Bart S Fisher, Managing Partner, Law Office of Bart S Fisher, Washington, DC, also discussed the innovative measures to protect the environment. Fisher shared, "We were recently in Bangalore, visiting Saint Mandy Hills, which has a lot of cultural and environmental significance but without environmental protection. We work in collaboration with the United Nations and the UNESCO World Heritage Programme. Our efforts concern with the movement that protects water resources." He further added, "I am on the board of directors of the company Clean Vision, based in West Virginia, where we recycle plastics. We convert these plastics into clean fuel. It is important to figure out innov-





**DR BART S FISHER** Managing Partner Law Office of Bart S Fisher Washington, DC



DR KAZEM SAMANDARI Executive Chairman, L'Opera and President, KCSH & Associates and Terra Firma International

"It is important to figure out innovative ways to protect the environment through tourism." "With a population of nearly 1.5 billion, India's potential is enormous in terms of job or wealth creation." tive ways to protect the environment through tourism.

### Job opportunities

Explaining how India's tourism sector holds immense potential for job creation and economic development, **Dr Kazem Samandari**, Executive Chairman, L'Opera and President, KCSH & Associates and Terra Firma International, shared, "India has a population of nearly 1.5 billion and it received 8 million tourists last year. In contrast, France with a population of 68 million, welcomed 100 million tourists in 2024. Therefore, the potential in India is enormous in terms of job or wealth creation in tourism."

A holistic approach to sustainability is required to create a powerful impact in the tourism industry. Samandari shared, "Tourism should have a meaning, and its purpose is to discover people and culture." He underlined that tourism, at its core, is interacting with people, which itself introduces an element of sustainability."









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## Green financing fuels innovative solutions

Industry experts underline robust govt support and inclusive approach to unlock green financing, which can effectively foster sustainable tourism.

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entred on the theme, 'Investing in Sustainability – Green Finance, Green Jobs, Government Action & Innovations,' the panel discussion at a recent event, 'Tourism Sustainability Summit 2025,' delved into the fledgling idea of green finance and investments in sustainability.

Quoting Dholavira, Statue of Unity, Rann of Kutch and Dhordo as best examples of Gujarat's sustainable tourism sites, **Sandip Kumar**, Tourist Officer, Tourism Corporation of Gujarat, Government of Gujarat, said, "What makes Gujarat so special is its local community. The path to sustainability lies in having an ownership sense among the community. This sense is vital for sustainable tourism. The locals, artisans, cuisine and culture of Gujarat are all involved to achieve sustainability." He highlighted the strong community involvement in Gujarat where everybody takes responsibility.

#### **Green financing**

While green financing often resem-

bles an image of renewable energy products or waste management. However, its application to tourism, particularly sustainable and environmental, social and governance (ESG) focused, holds immense potential. Anukool Bhatnagar, Partner, Sustain Edge ESG LLP; Former Chief General Manager, State Bank of India and MD & CEO, Nepal SBI Bank, said, "It is imperative to prioritise the planet, a significant portion of India's institutional financing should be directed towards tourism. The government's aim for 7.5 per cent green financing by 2030." Bhatnagar also discussed





**SANDIP KUMAR** Tourist Officer, Tourism Corporation of Gujarat, Govt. of Gujarat

"The path to sustainability lies in having a sense of ownership among the community." the struggles in accessing finance for tourism projects like hotels, which involve rigorous long-term sustainability assessments.

### **Global initiatives**

Global sustainability programmes focus on people and nature. Isabel Novoa, Global Head, Accelerator Programme, World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (UK), "With the accelerator programmes, we accelerate change from intention to action. We cover different topics, such as people's well-being, nature-positive initiatives, food systems and energy transition. We ensure good ideas become reality and how can that feed the rest of the industry, demonstrating that positive change is possible." Novoa added that any sustainable initiatives must be practical and address real-world problems. Their global employability programme helps talent attraction, ensuring quality training through partnerships and mentorship, including essential life skills and hands-on experience. It helps achieve an impressive 92 percent success rate in retention.

#### **Inclusivity for sustainability**

A collective effort from all can bring about tangible changes for a happier planet. To achieve this, we need to actively engage and include everyone in the sustainable activities. **Shashvat Singh**, Fellow (Climate Change & Sustainable Development), LokNeeti India, elaborated, "We often miss that sustainability is also about inclusivity. I urge industry partners that whatever policies they are developing concerning sustainable tourism, they must ensure that all sections of the society get involved."

He emphasised that an inclusive approach to all policies and initiatives is crucial to foster long-term sustainability. Addressing sustainaability effectively requires strategies that embrace all sections of society and align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Sustainable profitability

Sustainable practices are not only good for the environment, but it is also good for business. Renewable energy, waste management and rainwater harvesting are standard prac-





ANUKOOL BHATNAGAR Partner Sustain Edge ESG LLP



ISABEL NOVOA Global Head, Accelerator Programme, World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (UK)

"The Indian government's aim to achieve 7.5 per cent green financing by 2030." "With the accelerator programmes, we accelerate change from intention to action."



SHASHVAT SINGH Fellow (Climate Change & Sustainable Development), LokNeeti India



**VAIBHAV JATIA** Managing Director Rhythm Hotels & Resorts

"An inclusive approach to all policies and initiatives is crucial to foster long-term sustainability."

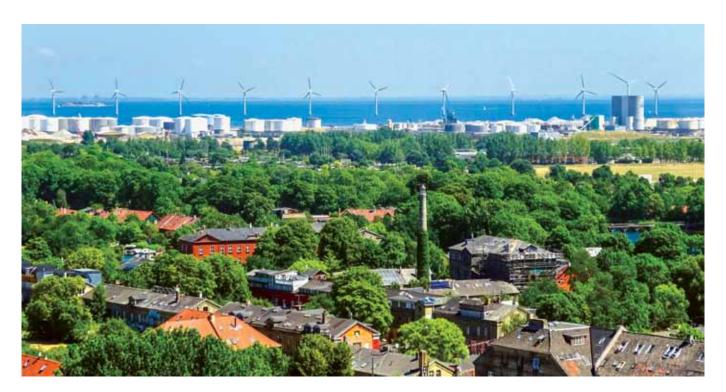
tices that are adopted by most of the global players. **Vaibhav Jatia**, MD, Rhythm Hotels & Resorts, shared, "In view of global investment, we run an alternative investment fund "Being ESG friendly is no more an option to seek investments, it is a necessity."

that invests in hotels, which is funded by international operators and investors. In Europe or US, being ESG friendly is no more an option to seek investments, it is a necessity. I envision that over time in India also, we will see that from private equity funds and other financiers." He added, "Being an operator, we have witnessed that sustainability is good for business. We have been able to cut down operating costs by 10 to 15 per cent. With Heat, Light and Power (HLP), we have been able to cut down 8 to 9 per cent."

### Strong support of government

Jatia highlighted the government's commitment to sustainability, saying, "Across various states, significant efforts are underway. Beyond rural sustainable housing, many states have implemented policies that enable even small power consumers to adopt solar and wind energy solutions. While this comes at a cost to the state electricity boards, it is a commendable government initiative. In Maharashtra, for instance, despite the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL) facing financial challenges, the government stepped in to provide compensation.."

Operating within the world's largest democracy helps create a unique environment where government and industry progress together. Thakur noted, "Government's sustainability initiatives are commendable. Our close working relationship is key to driving positive change in this sector."





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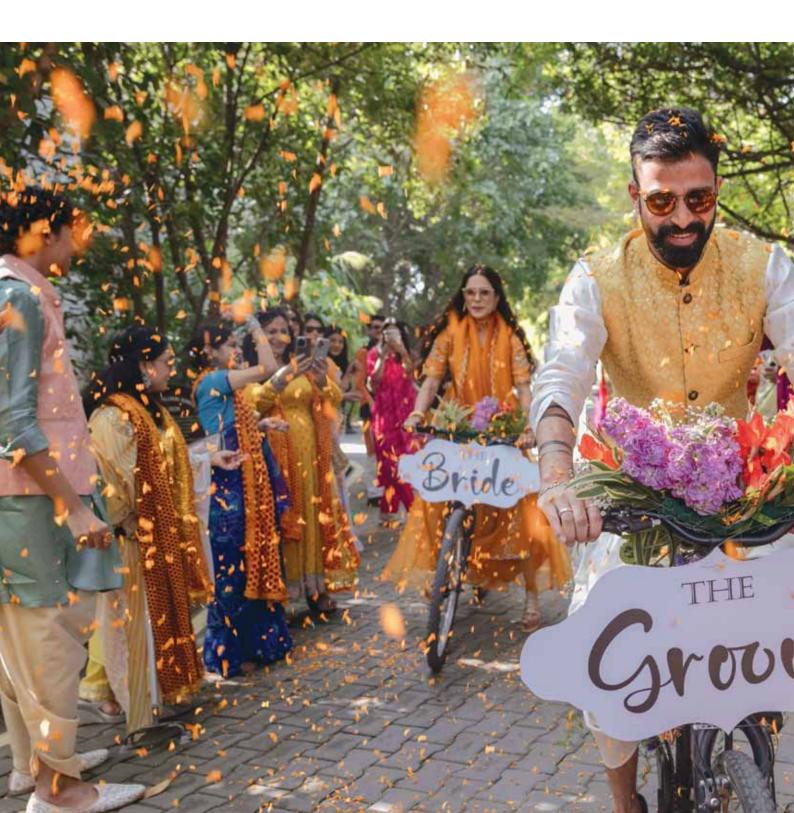
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### Hotels say 'I do' to wedding boom

From vows to value, hotels are embracing the year-round wedding rush, turbocharging both their primary and ancillary revenue streams.





hat was once a grand affair is now a year-round fare. From s u m m e r

vows to monsoon wows, the Big Fat Indian Wedding is not just a familial celebration anymore, it is a robust industry that prospers through every calendar quarter. Propelling the business growth for hotels, the wedding segment has emerged as a steady driver of occupancy and ancillary revenues. Today, it has turned traditional off-seasons into thriving opportunities. According to **Rajat Sethi**, General Manager, Fairmont Jaipur, the top reasons why weddings have become key revenue streams are—high total spend per event and predictable, blocked business. "At Fairmont Jaipur, weddings are a cornerstone of the hotel's revenue model, contributing approxi-



**RAJAT SETHI** General Manager Fairmont Jaipur



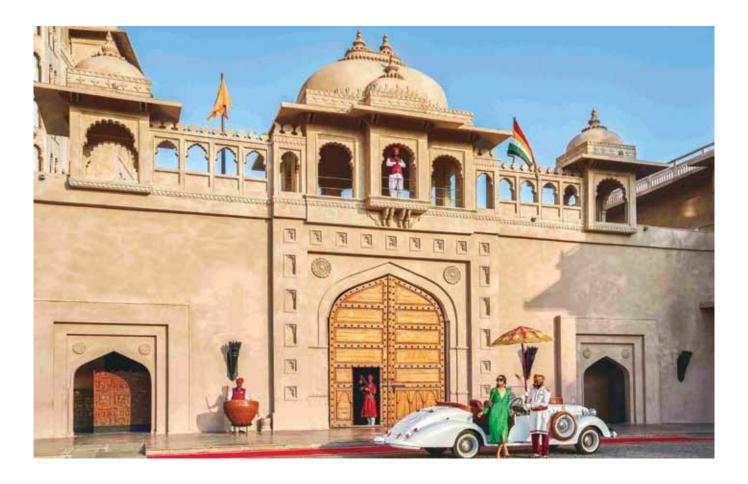
"Weddings contribute 70% of total revenue, followed by FITs at 20% and corporate MICE events at 10%."

mately 70 per cent of total revenue. This is followed by FITs at 20 per cent and corporate MICE events at 10 per cent," confirmed Sethi.

Cutting across seasons, the wedding segment enjoys consistent demand. Unlike corporate business or FIT travel, which remains sensitive to seasonality, weddings are now more emotion-driven-and increasingly becoming flexible on dates. Couples are no more shy of venturing beyond traditional peak months to book their favourite venue. "Weddings at Aahana typically entail a full resort buyout—with every category, from suites to private pool villas, booked exclusively for the celebration. Weddings comprise approximately 35 per cent of our overall revenue, with corporate events and FITs making up the remaining 65 per cent, agreed Ayu Tripathi, Director, Aahana Resort.

#### Intimate, extended stays

In the world of weddings, time truly is money—as the festivities grow, so does the fortune of hotels. Clients are now booking venues for extended stays, often with all-inclusive ser-





**AYU TRIPATHI** Director Aahana Resort

"What couples value most today is authenticity—and that's reflected in the way weddings are being planned."

vices, ensuring their guests have a gala time. Ultimately, it leads to a significant increase in revenue at the conclusion of an elaborate celebration. "A typical destination wedding lasts for two nights and three days wherein clients host their entire friends and family, making our resort their personal house and venue for a full three or two days. Furthermore we have created sound proof venues that make the experience for both the wedding guests and the regular staycaton guests more private and exclusive," shared Akshay Gupta, Executive Director, The Tivoli.

While Indian weddings have always been known for their grandeur, these have also become opportunity to reconnect with family and friends spread across the globe nowadays. Tripathi agreed, "Families are using the occasion to reconnect, turning weddings into mini-retreats that go beyond just the ceremonies—something Aahana's setting naturally supports. Guests often stay for two to three nights and indulge in spa therapies, curated gala dinners, jungle safaris and more. This leads to a significantly higher ancillary spend per guest, far exceeding that of corporate events or FIT bookings."

### **Deals over auspicious dates**

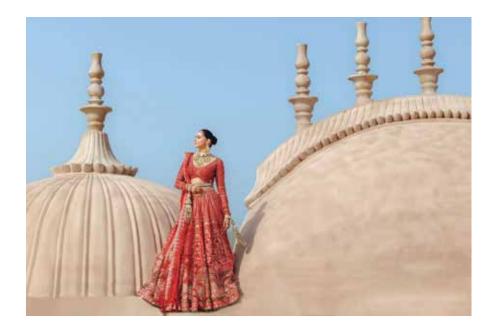
With the rising demand for destination weddings and limited premium venue options, couples taking the flexible route and increasingly planning celebrations across seasons and cultures. While the traditional notion of an 'off-season' is gradually evolving, there are still periods within the year that offer greater pricing flexibility. Explaining the difference between an off season deal versus peak season pricing, Tripathi said, "The primary distinction lies in ancillary costs. Services such as florals, photography, entertainment and venue rentals typically see a 10 to 20 per cent reduction during nonpeak dates. This enables families to allocate the same budget towards upgraded décor, additional events, or enhanced guest experiences."

Sethi shared, "The difference between off-season and in-season wedding packages primarily lies in cost, not quality. During the





Executive Director The Tivoli



"A typical destination wedding lasts for 2 nights, 3 days wherein most clients prefer a full buyout to ensure exclusivity & personalisation."

lean months-typically summer and monsoon- packages are 35 to 40 per cent more affordable compared to the peak winter season, while service standards, venue offerings and guest experiences remain consistent. Couples who aspire to host their wedding at premium destinations like Fairmont Jaipur often opt for offseason dates to stay within budget without compromising on luxury or experience. As a result, off-season weddings are increasingly seen as a smart, value-driven choice."

In a win-win trend for hotels, many couples are now choosing for extended three-night celebrations during these windows, instead of than shorter two-night formats typical of the peak season. "Flexibility around dates often leads to better value and allows for a more thoughtfully planned, detail-orientated wedding," added Tripathi.

#### **Showstopper: Wedding Feast**

A standout trend in today's wedding landscape is the increasing emphasis



on curated culinary and beverage experiences. "Couples and families are placing greater importance on creating immersive, personalised dining experiences that reflect the diverse backgrounds of their guests, many of whom travel from across the globe. At Fairmont Jaipur, we craft a global culinary journey under one roof-bringing together flavours from around the world to cater to varied palates," explained Sethi. A major highlight at the hotel is live and interactive cooking stations, which not only serve fresh, madeto-order dishes but also keep guests engaged and entertained throughout the event.

Sethi underscored the elevated beverage experience, especially for cocktail evenings and after-parties. He shared, "Couples are opting for live cocktail bars featuring bespoke drinks curated by expert mixologists. These are thoughtfully paired with gourmet 'one-bite wonders'—bitesized snacks crafted to complement the drinks and match the overall wedding theme."

### **Rolling out red carpet for guests**

Hoteliers highlighted the clear shift towards experiences that feel personal, rooted and intentional. "What couples value most today is authenticity—and that is reflected in the way weddings are being planned. At Aahana, we have seen couples design each moment to reflect who

### Innovative tech Reinventing hotel kitchens

To adapt to fast changing hotel kitchens, smart kitchen solutions are crucial for hotels to augment operational efficiency and help cut costs.



mart kitchen equipment is no longer luxury add-ons but a necessity for the hospitality industry. Intelligent tools like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, are proving to be a game-changing solution for hotels and restaurants. These technologies can effectively tackle operational challenges, such as resource wastage, energy loss and food storage, through predictive analytics and real-time monitoring, thereby translating into hotel profitability.

These kitchen innovations are rapidly gaining popularity due to their ability to streamline processes with minimum human involvement and enhance the overall kitchen experience.

#### **Innovation & quality**

Innovation is paramount to enhance product quality, which can directly impact the operational efficiency of the hotel kitchens. Sharon Mathew, General Manager, Cornell India, said, "Innovation and product quality form the backbone of our commitment to the evolving hospitality industry. Every product we design is rooted in technological foresight, user-centricity and a deep understanding of the operational challenges faced by professionals on the ground." The company's manufacturing process adheres to rigorous quality checks and uses premiumgrade materials, ensuring durability and minimal maintenance costs.

In the same light, **Gaurav Mittal**, CEO & Director, Antarctica



SHARON MATHEW General Manager Cornell India



**GAURAV MITTAL** CEO & Director Antarctica Equipment

Equipment, also emphasised the significance of product innovation and superior quality. Mittal said, "We design temperature-controlled display systems that combine advanced refrigeration technology with ergonomic, space-optimised designs—tailored to meet modern operational challenges." Antarctica Equipment focuses on durability, energy efficiency and intuitive usability that enables seamless day-



to-day operations. With modular formats, precision temperature control and low-maintenance engineering, their products enable to reduce food wastage, preserve freshness and maximise uptime.

#### **Benefits: Tech-led solutions**

Effective integration of high-tech not only reduces food waste and energy consumption but also significantly cuts down operating costs. Shedding light on how their AI-supported products make dishwashing processes more efficient, Razi Haider, Country Manager, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, ITW India (FEG Division), explained, "The new AI-supported FLOW Line features smart vision control, which identifies every item that is loaded onto the conveyor and adjusts the respective washing and rinsing parameters accordingly. The patent-pending AI-based feature ASR2, automatic soil removal, identifies the soil degree of the wash ware

The manufacturing process must undergo rigorous quality checks to ensure durability and low maintenance costs





**RAZI HAIDER** Country Manager, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, ITW India



**PA PRABHU** Managing Director, Revac Systems



and adjusts the soil removal cycle." These features make dishwashing economical, efficient and safer.

As AI emerges as a transformative force in the hospitality sector, **Mathew** shared that they are now advancing further by integrating AI and machine learning tools into their systems. These tools allow them to monitor performance in real time, maintenance requirements and downtime, minimising operational disruptions and empowering consistent service.

### **Driving ROI**

As energy costs continue to rise, implementing energy-efficient equipment in hotels has become essential to lower operational costs and drive a long-term profitability. PA Prabhu, Managing Director, Revac Systems (Chefmate), said, "All our innovations are chef-centric and are dedicated to improving the indoor air quality (IAQ) of the kitchen and focussed on energy optimisation to increase return on investment." Their Varisave DCKV panel provides a cleaning schedule based on the oil deposition in the hood. He added, "Revac uses Varisave as a service for energy efficiency, where the demand control is managed by the sensor which monitors the cooking operation. This helps modulate the energy consumed by the ventilation units, thereby saving energy."

### Optimise direct bookings with Al solutions



Stressing on need to bridge tech disparity, Switzerland-based online distribution platform, Hotel-Spider, is all set to penetrate India's hospitality industry.

🛉 Hazel Jain

o deepen the company's foothold in India's dynamic hotel industry, **Marco Baurdoux**, CEO, Hotel-Spider, recently visited India to meet their partners. During his visit, he engaged in discussions covering a broad spectrum of topics including the future of Indian hospitality, revenue management, data analytics, automated check-ins and artificial intelligence (AI).

Speaking about the Indian market, he said, "All hotels look for reliable, functional software with top-notch customer care. The main difference I see in India is the tech disparity. There are a few hotel chains in India that are leading the game. On the other hand, there is a huge chunk of hotels that are not working with technology, preferring manpower over technology."

**Baurdoux added**, "AI comes with a few challenges, and the main one being data privacy. Where is all this



MARCO BAURDOUX CEO Hotel Spider

data going, for instance? I believe there will be other touch points where AI could be effectively used, such as price automation, price suggestion, content creation and website creation."

Technology in hospitality is evolving every year. Having a perfect tech ecosystem for hotels in India is becoming a necessity for every hotel category, said **Shveta Sharma**, COO,



SHVETA SHARMA COO, India, Hotel Spider

India, Hotel-Spider, noting, "We will soon launch a new payment solution for hoteliers that will help them convert their website into a commercial platform. With every hotelier today is looking for direct bookings. They do not want to be dependent only on online travel agents. To achieve this, they need the right website with the right tools from a booking engine to fintech layers," said Sharma.





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# Cyber hygiene: Not a choice but necessity

With increasing use of IoT devices, cybersecurity measures are vital for hotels to shield from cyberattacks, which can help prevent guest data breaches.





he hospitality industry's increasing reliance on technology has brought numerous benefits, from streamlined operations to enhanced guest experiences. However, this digital transformation also exposes hotels to a myriad of cyber threats. As the Internet of Things (IoT) becomes more prevalent in hotels, ensuring cyber hygiene and protecting data privacy has become a critical concern. According to a report by Forbes, the average cost of a data breach in the hospitality industry was US \$3.36 million in 2023. This highlights the importance of prioritising cyber hygiene and IoT data privacy in hotels.

### Importance of cyber hygiene

Cyber hygiene refers to users' practices and steps to maintain the health and safety of system and devices. Maintaining good cyber hygiene is crucial in the hospitality industry, where sensitive data of the guests is constantly collected and processed to understand their needs.

### Here are some key practices hotels can adopt:

• Strong password protocols: Implementing strong password Regular cybersecurity training for staff is essential to identify phishing attempts

protocols and multi-factor authentication across hotel systems can significantly reduce the risk of unauthorised access. This is a fundamental step in protecting sensitive data and preventing cyber-attacks.

• **Regular cybersecurity training:** Regular cybersecurity training for



**VINESH GUPTA** General Manager The Den Hotel, Bengaluru

staff is essential to identify phishing attempts and social engineering tactics. Employees should be aware of the latest threats and know how to respond and tackled appropriately.

 Software updates: Ensuring all software, firewalls and antivirus programmes are consistently updated to prevent vulnerabilities. Outdated systems can provide an entry point for cyber attackers.

#### IoT data privacy in hotels

The increasing use of IoT devices in hotels, such as smart room controls and voice assistants, has raised concerns about data privacy. Hotels must protect guest data and ensure to maintain transparency about data collection practices.

• Segregation of IoT networks: Separating IoT networks from



critical hotel operations, such as billing and guest databases, can prevent a breach in one system from affecting others.

- Encryption of data: Encrypting data transmitted through IoT devices and ensuring secure configurations can protect guest data from unauthorised access.
- Collaborating with secure IoT vendors: Hotels must collaborate with IoT vendors that follow stringent security/ privacy protocols. These measures can ensure device security.



#### **Transparency & regulations**

Hotels must maintain transparency with guests regarding data collection practices and adhere to applicable data privacy regulations. This includes the following aspects:

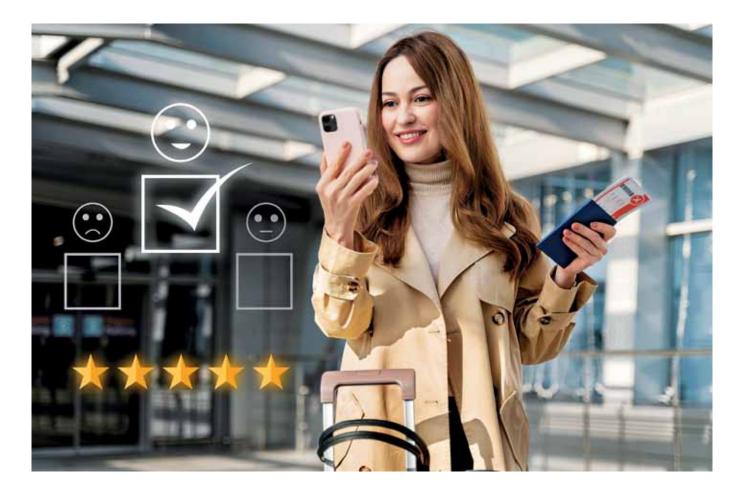
- Clear communication: Clearly communicate data collection practices to guests and provide options for opt-out.
- **Regulatory compliance:** Adhering to data privacy regulations like the general data protection regulation (GDPR).

By implementing these practices, hotels can protect guest data, maintain trust and ensure a secure experience.

Prioritising cyber hygiene and IoT data privacy is no longer a choice but a necessity in the digital age. Hotels that fail to do so risk compromising guest data and damaging their reputation.

Hotels can protect guest data and maintain trust by adopting strong password protocols, providing regular cybersecurity training and ensuring software updates. In addition, they need to focus on segregating IoT networks, encrypting data, collaborating with secure vendors and maintaining transparency.





### Guest feedback can amplify brand advocacy

Guest reviews can make or break hotel's reputation, hoteliers should judiciously engage online and offline reviews to ensure guest satisfaction.



very guest feedback, whether positive or negative, is a blessing in disguise. It is a treasure trove to gauge your strengths and flaws, providing hotels an opportunity to fine-tune their offerings that appeal to guests. According to a report by TripAdvisor, 2.81 per cent of people frequently or always read reviews before booking a hotel. Therefore, a positive image is crucial to win guests' trust, which is the linchpin to staying one step ahead of competitors.

The challenge is the credibility factor, where one fails to distinguish between genuine feedback and paid promotions. However, personal recommendations are not yet obsolete, even in an era of easily accessible online reviews. For example, who would you trust more—suggestions coming from a friend or an unknown online user? Heartfelt and first-hand experiences shared by a friend will definitely have a greater impact. Therefore, prioritising both offline and online reviews can be a pragmatic approach for hotels to maximise their brand value.

#### Why guest feedback matters

Guest feedback plays a vital role in gathering valuable insights, refining service quality and meeting overall guest expectations. Valuing guest feedback can extensively help hotels to make a greater connection with customers. As **Mormukut Rathore**, Director, Narain Niwas Palace Hotel, Jaipur, shared, "Whether the feedback is a compliment or constructive criticism, it is key to take every





Director, Narain Niwas Palace Hotel, Jaipur



**DINESH RAI** General Manager Crowne Plaza Kochi



VIKRAM BAJPAI Director of Sales, Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan

review seriously—be it from Google, TripAdvisor, online travel agencies (OTGs), direct conversation or poststay surveys. I advocate for carefully analysing recurring themes in feedback, from service quality and room comfort to dining and cleanliness."

Today, most hotel chains use Medallia as their feedback management system. This tool uses AI and real time analytics to collect, study and act on guest feedback, leading to better business results.

Talking about the SaaS platform, **Dinesh Rai**, GM, Crowne Plaza Kochi, said, "The tool helps hotels understand guest demographics, identify trends and tailor services. It enables us to recognise a shift towards bleisure travel based on feedback and then adapted the facilities to cater to this niche." "Whether the feedback is a compliment or constructive criticism, it is key to take every review seriously."



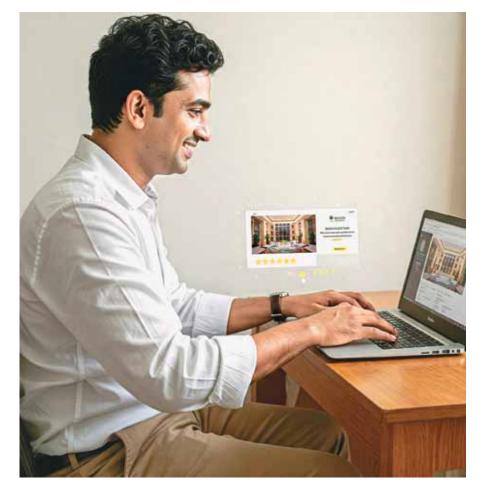
Explaining how Marriot collects feedback, Vikram Bajpai, Director of Sales, Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan, said, "Marriot utilises automated surveys that are randomly sent to guest's post-stay and cover all touchpoints of the experience. Random surveys ensure unbiased feedback from a random selection of guests." Digitally, they compile data from surveys that allow them to track scores and identify areas for improvement. He added, "Based on scores, we judge what services the guests are unhappy with. Anything that is not a high score, then we reach out to the guest for details."

### **Opportunity in bad reviews**

Negative reviews are inevitable in any businesses. However, it also presents an opportunity to learn, rectify and improve your services, and turn your frustrated guest to a loyal supporter of your business. The best way to protect your business's reputation, Rai exhorted, "A prompt and professional response is key when It is important to acknowledge each criticism with empathy and take responsibility where it is necessary

dealing with a bad review. Our hotel prioritises actively listening to guest concerns and offering genuine solutions. We emphasise clear communication and follow-up to ensure guest satisfaction."

Echoing a similar thought, Bajpai stressed upon a proactive response, which is key to addressing the issue. Hotel team must reach out to guests to understand the root cause of their dissatisfaction and then take corrective actions, which may be offering compensation or complimentary services.





YOGITA GOYAL Co-founder Stotrak Hotels

To ensure timely responses, active monitoring of reviews is crucial across platforms. Rathore said, "We analyse repeated complaints to identify patterns and implement corrective measures. By handling criticism constructively, we aim to rebuild guest trust and enhance service quality." He added that they acknowledge each criticism with empathy and take responsibility where it is necessary.

### **Crisis management strategies**

Not all guest concerns become a crisis. But when an issue affects the safety of guests and staff, hotel's reputation, operations or finances, it becomes a crisis. Explaining how they deal when embroiled in a crisis, Rai said, "Hotels have a crisis management team to handle such situations that escalate beyond individual guest complaints. Hotels have protocols in place to deal with legal issues, safety concerns and online scams. In severe cases, the corporate office and legal team get involved."

Bajpai pointed out that a structured approach is essential to handle such situations. He suggested, "We identify when the guest stayed and every touch point of the guest. We reach out to the guest and speak to them to understand their expectations. Swift action involving top management and staff to address the issue promptly is important."

The Marketing and PR team plays a key role in crisis circumstances. "They help shape online perception,







**ABHILASH K RAMESH** Director Kairali Ayurvedic Group

ensuring responses align with brand values. In cases of misinformation or reputational risks, they manage the narrative through strategic messaging and media engagement," shared Rathore.

#### **Online vs offline: Credibility**

There is a constant debate over the effectiveness of online reviews and word-of-mouth referrals. In today's digital age, online reviews have a wider reach of audience and are easy to influence guest decisions. Nevertheless, credibility is questioned with no proper mechanism to detect fake reviews and manipulations. Sharing her views, Yogita Goyal, Co-founder, Stotrak Hotels, said, "For us, both online ratings and word-of-mouth play crucial roles in enhancing brand value, but the latter holds an emotional connection. While online ratings offer visibility, word-of-mouth builds trust organically, turning guests into brand ambassadors. A recommendation from a friend carries far more weight than an anonymous review."

According to **Abhilash K Ramesh**, Director, Kairali Ayurvedic Group, word-of-mouth carries much stronger credibility. When a guest shares the sense of contentment they felt during their stay, it carries a special energy. The happiness they experience is contagious, and it resonates deeply with everyone they share it with.

Online reviews can be helpful, but they are not always reliable, as there are cases of fake reviews that can be



Credibility of online reviews is questioned with no proper mechanism to detect fake reviews and manipulations misleading. "Word-of-mouth carries a level of credibility that is hard to replicate, as personal recommendations are based on real experiences. People tend to trust firsthand experiences over unknown reviews, which is a great value for brand building," said **Sanjay Sharma**, Director, Organic Hideaways. However, he emphasised a combination of both can be the best strategy.



### **Conscious travel takes lead for Indians**

Booking.com's report reveals how Indian travellers are leveraging their travel choices to empower local communities and support sustainable tourism.



🛉 DDP Bureau

he 10<sup>th</sup> edition of Booking. com's annual Sustainable Travel Report explores consumer attitudes and intentions about the social and ecological impact of travel.

With insights from 32,000 travellers in 34 countries, including India, the research shows a shift in traveller perceptions of what sustainability encompasses. For the first time, more than half of Indian travellers (59 percent) are now conscious of travel's impact on communities as well as the environment and 63 per cent now want to leave places better than when they arrived.

The report revealed that while 74 per cent of Indian travellers feel that

tourism has a positive impact overall on the place where they live.

### **Understanding local needs**

The report highlighted that 43 per cent of Indian travellers believe there is the right amount of tourism where they live. Some of the common challenges they face, include traffic congestion (43 per cent), overcrowding (40 per cent), rising cost of living (36 per cent) and littering (33 per cent).

Despite these concerns, only a quarter (27 per cent) believe that capping the number of tourists in their home destination is the answer.

### **Mindful travel**

This year, travelling more sustainably remains important for most Indian travellers (96 per cent). As per the report, 99 percent of travellers "59 per cent of Indian travellers recognise travel's impact on communities as well as the environment."

want to make more sustainable travel choices. "It is encouraging to see the definition of sustainable travel expanding on both sides of the lens. Travellers are increasingly seeing it not just as an environmental concern, but as something deeply connected to local communities," noted **Santosh Kumar**, Country Manager (India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia), Booking.com.

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GRAFF introduced its latest collection of immersive shower experiences designed to redefine home wellness. The Riva collection is inspired by the finely crafted instrument panels of luxury cars and yachts. With Riva, you can control every aspect of the shower experience—flow angles, modes, light, and temperature, creating a personal realm of luxury.



### ( Elegant yet modern

Prerna Mohan Design Studio offers a customdesigned sofa that blends bold aesthetics with refined comfort, tailored to elevate any luxury space. Every detail reflects expert craftsmanship and timeless style. This exclusive, made-to-measure furniture can bring your vision to life and transform your interiors.



### **Timeless aesthetics**

Maison Du Luxe introduced the Lien Collection, inspired by the fluid yet structured nature of chain links. It explores the profound connection between form and function, elegance and durability. Using the finest materials and sustainable practices, it elevates luxury to a deeply personal experience.







Australian Trade and Investment Commission

### Australian Lamb: Premium choice for India's hospitality industry

🚽 DDP Bureau

he Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade) in collaboration with Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), through its global brand Aussie Lamb, is set to revolutionise India's food and hospitality sectors. With zero import duty, the brand is introducing top-tier lamb to Indian markets, offering an opportunity for culinary excellence.

#### USP

Australia, the largest exporter of lamb globally, is known for its premium red meat, processed to the highest food safety regulations and animal welfare standards. "We see strong potential for Australian lamb in India—consumers value its quality and versatility. Our goal is



to strengthen trade ties that benefit both Australian farmers and India's dynamic food industry," said **Murray Spence**, Trade & Investment Commissioner, Austrade.

With over 25 standardised cuts, Australian lamb suits a variety of Indian dishes—from slow-cooked curries and kebabs to fine-dining grills. Bone-in cuts are ideal for rich Indian flavours while premium racks and loins elevate gourmet offerings.

### **Reliable supply chain**

Australia's robust meat supply chain, backed by numerous dedicated suppliers and importers, guarantees a consistent supply of lamb to India. The success of Australian lamb in India is driven by a robust and growing partnership between both countries, supported by seamless imports and stringent quality standards.

#### Unmatched quality

What sets Aussie Lamb apart is its superior quality. The lamb is raised in pristine environments, free from synthetic growth hormones and adheres to the strictest animal welfare practices. "Its versatility makes Australian lamb a great fit for Indian foodservice — from Mughlai to Mediterranean, the quality is consistently exceptional," emphasised Spence.



### Movements



Zara Singh Director, Revenue (India and South Asia), Accor



Shreesh Mishra General Manager, Fortune Select SG Highway Ahmedabad



**Fuzail Nevrekar,** Director, Catering Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai

Accor has appointed Zara Singh as Director of Revenue in India and South Asia. With two decades of experience, Singh will be responsible for leading Accor's revenue management and distribution strategy across India and South Asia, further strengthening the brand's commercial capabilities in the region.

Fortune Select SG Highway

Ahmedabad (member of ITC

Hotel Ltd) has appointed Shreesh

Mishra as its new General Man-

ager. In his new role, Mishra will

be overseeing the hotel's overall

operations, development of the

new inventory by adding 14 rooms

and one new restaurant and driv-

ing strategic initiatives.

Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai

has appointed Jyotika Sahani as

Director of Catering. With such

appointments, the hotel is set to

Director of Business Develop-

ment and Fuzail Nevrekar as

strengthen its position as a

leader in luxury hospitality,

business innovation and be-

spoke event experiences.



Vinodh Ramamurthy General Manager, Pullman Chennai Anna Salai



Raghavendra Kollipara Financial Controller, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre

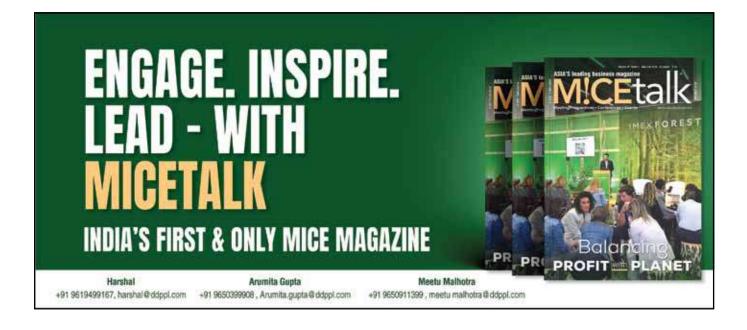


Uttaran Acharya Front Office Manager, ibis Styles Mysuru

Pullman Chennai Anna Salai has appointed Vinodh Ramamurthy as its General Manager. With over two decades of experience in the hospitality industry, Ramamurthy will focus on strengthening the property's position as a preferred destination for both business and leisure travellers in Chennai.

Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) has appointed Raghavendra Kollipara as the Financial Controller. Kollipara will be responsible for overseeing financial planning, risk management, budgeting and compliance to drive operational excellence.

Uttaran Acharya has been appointed as the Front Office Manager of ibis Styles Mysuru. Uttaran brings with him a wealth of experience in front office operations, guest relations and team leadership. Prior to this, he served as Assistant Front Office Manager (Operational Head) at The Leela Bhartiya City, Bengaluru.







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