

# HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA fhrai magazine

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A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE  
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# President's Note



*Dear Members and Stakeholders,*

**I** am proud to assume the office of President of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI). As we navigate a rapidly evolving landscape, we are committed to addressing the most pressing challenges and seizing the immense opportunities for our industry.

One of the foremost priorities I outlined upon taking office is securing infrastructure status for the hospitality sector. This long-awaited recognition will unlock a host of benefits for the entire sector, most importantly, long-term credit facilities at affordable rates. We will also strive to achieve other critical demands of the industry, including GST rationalisation, industry status for tourism and hospitality across all states, the ease of doing business in the hospitality sector, and a single window for copyright licensing. These key policy measures are vital in creating a level playing field, making the tourism sector in the country sustainable and competitive, creating new jobs, and providing better services to our guests.

Another critical area of focus is addressing the human resource challenges the sector faces today. As demand for quality hospitality services continues to surge, it is imperative that we adequately equip our industry with a skilled and efficient workforce. Developing a skilled workforce is essential for meeting industry demands, enhancing guest experiences, and promoting the sector's long-term success.

Looking ahead, FHRAI is deeply committed to collaborating with state and central governments to stimulate new investments in the sector and elevate Indian tourism to greater heights.

Together with policymakers, we aim to create an ecosystem where investments thrive, innovation flourishes, and our industry becomes a global leader.

“

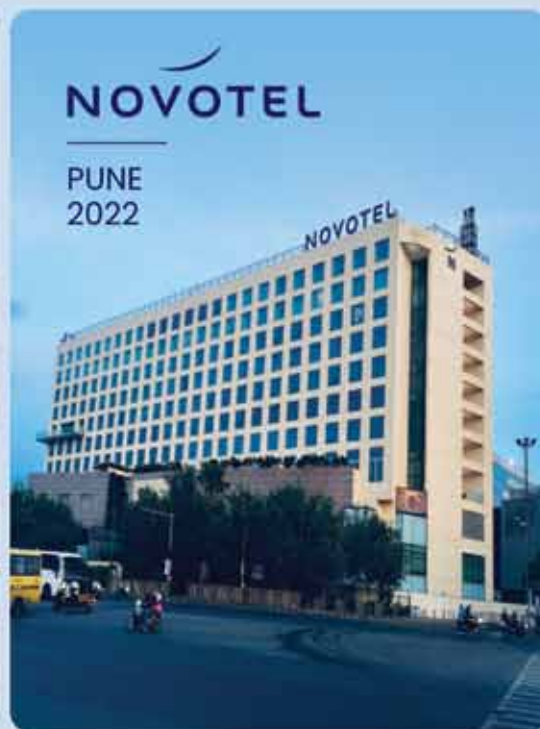
**One of the foremost priorities that I outlined upon taking office is securing infrastructure status for the hospitality sector. This long-awaited recognition will unlock a host of benefits for the sector, most importantly, long-term credit facility at affordable rates.”**

We are on the cusp of an exciting era, and with your support, I am confident we can achieve our collective goals. I look forward to working alongside all of you to make India's hospitality industry a force to be reckoned with on the global stage.

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

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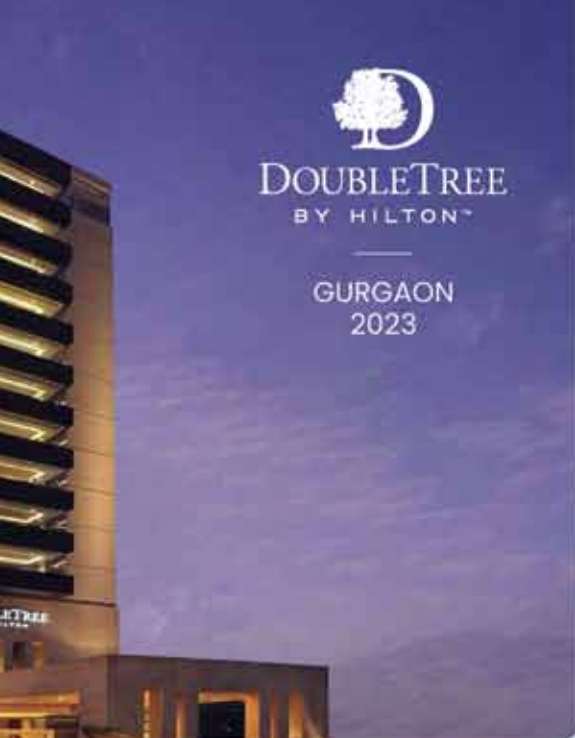
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Wed in India and Design in India initiatives offer hotel sector opportunity to curate, customise, and elevate their wedding offerings, believes Mugdha Sinha.



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Collaboration is essential to address challenges and drive growth within hospitality sector, reckon industry leaders at FHRAI Convention.



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HRAWI contends Maharashtra's AI CCTV mandate is excessive, costly, and unproven in boosting public safety within hotels & restaurants.



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# K Syama Raju elected new FHRAI President

Newly elected President **K Syama Raju** prioritises investment-friendly environment, GST reduction, and skilled workforce enhancement.



 **Lipla Negi**

**K Syama Raju**, Managing Director, Hotel Maurya Bengaluru and President, SIHRA, has been elected as the new President of FHRAI. He assumed office on 1 November 2024 after being elected in the 68th Annual General Meeting held at Hotel Le Meridien, New Delhi. With over four decades of experience in the hospitality industry, Raju brings a wealth of expertise and a strong track record of leadership and advocacy for the growth and development of India's tourism and hospitality sectors.

In a candid address, the newly elected President of the Federation shared his vision for the future of India's hospitality sector, stressing the need for structural changes and investment to propel the industry toward its full potential. With decades of experience in the sector, including a long tenure of 25 years, the President shared his plans to champion the cause of hoteliers across the country. "Our main objective now is to secure reductions in GST for restaurants and hotels. We are working hard to ensure that the hotel sector across India is granted industry status, just as we have already seen in Karnataka, Maharashtra,

and more recently in Andhra Pradesh, where Chandrababu Naidu's government announced similar benefits," he shared.

He also highlighted the importance of pushing for uniform regulations and benefits for the hospitality sector nationwide. He expressed that hospitality-friendly moves such as in Karnataka, where the government extended restaurant and hotel operating hours until 1:00 am, a move he hopes to see replicated across India. "This is the kind of progress we need to see across the country. We want to work towards making tourism and hospitality a priority sector," he added.



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A key challenge identified by the President is the shortage of skilled manpower, especially in southern states, where the industry has increasingly turned to the northeastern region for workers. “We are facing significant manpower challenges in certain states, and it is crucial that we focus on skill development. We are planning to establish training institutes to enhance the quality and quantity of manpower for the industry,” he revealed. The Federation aims to work closely with the government to promote skill development, with a focus on attracting and training a new generation of workers.

Addressing the issue of investment, the President noted that state governments are increasingly focusing on attracting investments for their hospitality sector. “Every state is hosting investment meetings, and Karnataka is planning a major event in February. These platforms will allow hoteliers to explore new opportunities for investment, and we are fully committed to driving these initiatives forward,” he



**K Syama Raju**  
President  
FHRAI

Federation that include **Pradeep Shetty** as Vice President HRAWI, **SK Jaiswal** as Vice President from HRANI, **Nitin Kothari** as Vice President from HRAEI, **K Nagaraju** as Honorary Secretary, **Garish Oberoi** as Honorary Treasurer and Ashok Singh and Nirav Gandhi as Joint Honorary Secretaries.

FHRAI plays a vital role in supporting the growth of India's hospitality and tourism sectors. The Federation provides a dynamic interface between the industry, government, regulatory bodies, academia, international organisations, civil society, and the media. Founded in 1955, the FHRAI is the third-largest hospitality association in the world and has diligently




**FHRAI wants to create environment that encourages investment, boosts skills of our workforce, and elevates India's tourism potential to new heights.”**



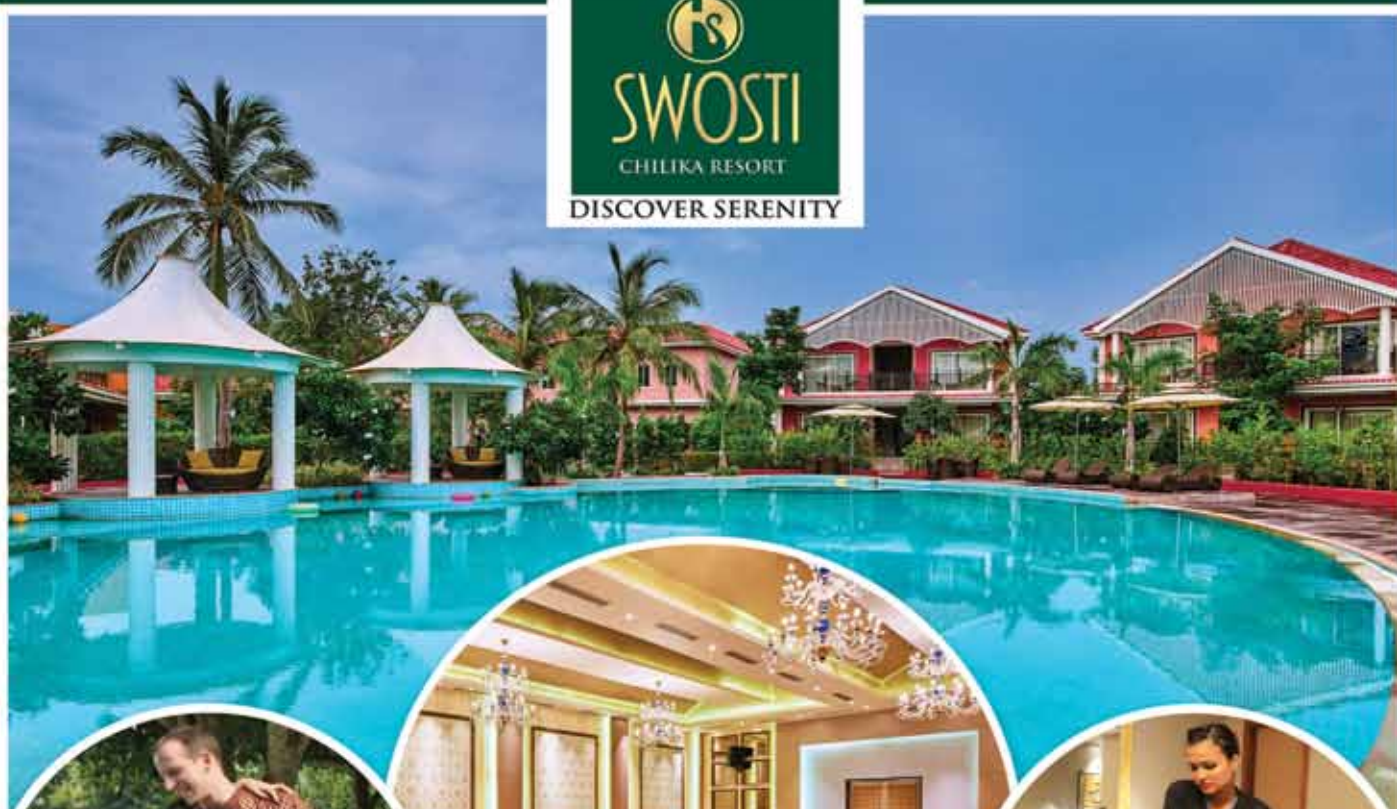
explained. In addition, stressing upon the importance of promoting the hospitality industry as a priority sector for the future of India's tourism, he said, “Ultimately, we want to create an environment that encourages investment, boosts the skills of

our workforce, and elevates India's tourism potential to new heights.”

The Executive Committee also elected the new office bearers of FHRAI, who supervise the routine affairs at the

built on its rich legacy. The association is today privileged to serve as the leading voice of the hotel and restaurant industries and plays a seminal role in supporting the growth trajectory of India's hospitality and tourism sectors. 





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# Shaping future of Indian hospitality

FHRAI convention highlighted importance of government-industry collaboration in driving economic growth through hospitality industry.



DDP Bureau

In Goa's scenic embrace, the FHRAI's recent three-day convention ignited a powerful dialogue on the future of India's hospitality sector. This gathering united industry veterans, government leaders, and 500 key stakeholders, all driven by a shared vision to reimagine the next phase of tourism and hospitality. Together, they explored innovative pathways for growth and collaboration, setting the stage for an industry that not only enriches economies but also transforms lives. With keynote speakers such as **Puneet Chhatwal**, MD and CEO, IHCL, and **Nitin Gadkari**, Union



**Pradeep Shetty**  
Vice President  
FHRAI



“  
Strong participation at convention showcases our commitment to innovation in hospitality, driving meaningful change for brighter future.”

Minister for Road Transport & Highways, the convention underscored the pivotal role of tourism in India's economic expansion. Inaugurated by **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Union Minister for Tourism & Culture and **Dr. Pramod Sawant**, Chief Minister, Goa, the event highlighted the government's commitment to bolstering the sector.

“I want to extend my thanks to everyone who attended this year's convention. Your participation reflects our collective commitment to excellence and innovation in the hospitality industry. Together, we can drive meaningful change and create a brighter future for our sector. I am grateful to our speakers, panellists, and partners for contributing their insights and expertise. It is through collaboration that we can overcome challenges, seize new opportunities and ensure that our industry continues to evolve and







prosper," said **Pradeep Shetty**, Vice President, FHRAI.

Echoing similar views, **K Syama Raju**, President, FHRAI, said, "The FHRAI convention, a significant event for SIHRA, has made a triumphant return after a six-year hiatus. This year, the event was held in Goa, bringing together key stakeholders and government officials of the industry. After a gap of six years, we are thrilled to have it back, and Goa is the perfect host. It fostered collaboration, knowledge sharing, and networking opportunities among industry professionals. Everyone is appreciating this, and we aim to make it an annual event. Next year, we are planning to host the convention in South India. While the specific location for the next year's event is yet to be finalised, cities such as Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Cochin are being considered. A decision on the venue is expected within the next one or two months."

Key discussions centred on the ambitious goals outlined by the Centre of Excellence (CoE), a dedicated platform launched in 2024 to foster knowledge, innovation, and excellence in hospitality and tourism. Panel discussions covered essential topics such as emerging market trends, customer experience enhancement, digital transformation, and sustainable practices. Industry experts contributed diverse perspectives on how



to adapt to evolving customer expectations and integrate responsible tourism initiatives to ensure a resilient future for hospitality.

The convention also recognised exceptional contributions within the industry, presenting awards to leaders on both the opening and closing days. A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented posthumously to **PRS Oberoi**, Former Executive Chairman, EIH Limited, in recognition of his leadership and impact on the hospitality industry. In addition, three industry leaders were inducted into the Hall of Fame. These are **Dr. Ajit B Kerkar**, Former Chairman and Managing Director, IHCL, **Late Capt. CP Krishnan Nair**, Founder Chairman, The Leela Group of Hotels, and **Late Lalit Suri**, Founder Chairman, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group. □

### Ease of Doing Business report released

A report on the 'Ease of Doing Business' in the Indian hospitality industry by the newly established FHRAI Centre of Excellence (CoE) was launched on the sidelines of the 54<sup>th</sup> FHRAI Annual Convention in Goa. The report highlights critical industry challenges and offers strategic recommendations to improve the business environment for hotels and restaurants across the country.

Developed after consultations with over 500 key stakeholders including hotel owners, operators, regulators, and industry associations, the report provides actionable insights aimed at fostering growth in India's hospitality sector. It emphasizes the pivotal role of the hospitality industry within the broader travel and tourism sector, which significantly contributes to economic growth, job creation, and social development.

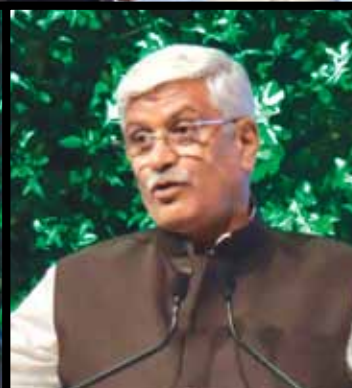


# FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON INDIAN HOSPITALITY

54<sup>th</sup> FHRAI convention in Goa unites industry stakeholders to discuss sustainable growth and envision US\$3 trillion tourism economy by 2047.



















India's rising  
influence in  
global tourism economy



Focusing on India's tourism growth, **Puneet Chhatwal** emphasised importance of collaboration to drive long-term success in industry.



**Lipla Negi**

Invoking the inspiring words of industrialist and philanthropist **Ratan Tata**, **Puneet Chhatwal**, MD & CEO of IHCL, emphasised that the ambitious vision of Tourism@2047 could only be realised through collaboration across all sectors. In his keynote speech at the 54th FHRAI Annual Convention, Chhatwal quoted Tata, saying, "As Mr. Tata famously said, 'When you want to go fast, go alone; when you want to go far, go together.' The future of Indian tourism depends on our ability to work together—government, industry, and all our stakeholders."

Addressing a gathering of hospitality industry leaders and key stakeholders, Chhatwal outlined his vision for the future of tourism in India. He highlighted how the sector could continue to drive economic development, create jobs, and position India as one of the world's top tourism destinations by 2047.

His keynote speech was preceded by a tribute to the remarkable contributions of the Timblo family, whose vision and dedication have been instrumental in shaping Goa's thriving hospitality industry. "The Timblo family's efforts are a shining example of what can be achieved when we unite to build lasting legacies," Chhatwal said, adding, "Their legacy demonstrates the power of a shared vision for growth."

#### **India: incredible rise**

Shifting his focus to India's meteoric rise on the global stage, he emphasised the country's impressive strides in both economic growth and technological advancements. "In 1947, India contributed only 3 per cent to global GDP. Today, we stand as the fifth-largest economy, contributing 7 per cent of the global GDP, and in the next five to seven years, we are expected to contribute 10 per cent of the world's GDP. This is an achievement few could have predicted," he said, highlighting India's dramatic rise over the past several decades.



**Puneet Chhatwal**  
MD & CEO  
IHCL

“With rising disposable incomes, young population, and improving infra, India's tourism sector will continue to thrive.”



**Tourism can become India's largest job creator. With right policies, double-digit growth in tourism's GDP contribution is achievable."**

**Puneet Chhatwal,**  
MD & CEO  
IHCL



He continued to outline key statistics that demonstrate India's progress, such as the exponential increase in per capita income, which has risen from ₹250 in 1947 to ₹1,85,000 today. "This growth is fuelled by the rise in employment—from 100 million people employed in 1947 to 600 million today. India now accounts for one out of every six people employed globally," he added.

### **Carousel of diverse experiences**

Further delving into India's tourism potential, he credited the country's vast cultural and geographical diversity for its strong global appeal. "With six mountain ranges, a coastline of 7,500 km, and numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites, India is a treasure trove of tourism potential," he said, pointing out that no other country can match the sheer variety of tourism experiences that are available in India.

"The contribution of tourism to the economy cannot be overstated," he continued. "Not only does tourism create jobs directly within the sector, but it also stimulates growth in other sectors such as construction, agriculture, and local craftsmanship. It is one of the highest multipliers of employment, with one job in tourism creating 10 jobs in other sectors."



### **Creating jobs**

India's tourism sector employs millions of people and has the potential to support even more. The current workforce in India's organised tourism sector stands at 43 million, with projections suggesting it could easily expand to 100 million in the coming years. "The tourism sector has the potential to be the largest job creator in India. With the right policy interventions, we can expect double-digit growth in tourism's contribution to GDP," he pointed out.

### **Big success stories**

Emphasising the need for better infrastructure, Chhatwal highlighted the government's role in planning and executing large-scale projects. "India's airport infrastructure has expanded significantly, from just 10 airports in 1947 to 150 today, with plans to reach 300 soon. Similarly, the expansion of highways and railway stations is critical to supporting the growing tourism demand."

### **Unprecedented surge**

In closing, Chhatwal highlighted the immense opportunities ahead for India as it approaches its 100th year of independence in 2047. With a young demographic and sustained economic growth, India is well-positioned to become the world's third-largest economy, with tourism playing a pivotal role in this transformation. "We have the potential to become the third-largest tourism destination globally. With rising disposable incomes, a young population, and improving infrastructure, India's tourism and hospitality sectors will continue to thrive," he said.

Chhatwal also acknowledged the dedication and hard work of hospitality professionals, who continue to serve with a 'guest-first' mindset, even during holidays and festivals. He commended hoteliers such as **Dr. Jyotsna Suri** for her exceptional contributions to minority and marginalised communities, as well as FHRAI President **Pradeep Shetty** for the association's ongoing efforts to voice the concerns of the industry. He concluded by reflecting on his decades-long journey in the hospitality sector. □



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# Improved roads enhance hotel infrastructure

**Nitin Gadkari** applauds hospitality sector's contributions to country's GDP, job creation, and government revenue at FHRAI convention.



DDP Bureau

At the recent FHRAI convention, **Nitin Gadkari**, Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways spotlighted the hospitality sector's vital role in strengthening India's economy and boosting GDP. Addressing key industry stakeholders, he praised the sector's far-reaching contributions and shared how infrastructure developments, such as expressways and ropeways, are reshaping travel, tourism, and local economies across the country.

Gadkari said, "With the development of expressways, the travelling distance between the cities has been greatly reduced. The distance between Delhi to Dehradun, which used to take six hours, has been reduced to two hours. The distance between Delhi to Jaipur has been reduced to four hours from six hours. Similarly, distance has been reduced between Delhi to Amritsar. Because of the construction of roads, hotel infrastructure has been improved."

Gadkari added, "Adventure tourism has grown, and with ropeways planned for 260 locations, new hotels and restaurants will come up, further bolstering tourism and hospitality sectors."

Emphasising skilled manpower, he urged the sector to establish more hospitality institutes and focus on quality training for students. He averred, "I urge the sector to focus on the training



**Nitin Gadkari**  
Minister for Road Transport & Highways

“Adventure tourism has grown, and with ropeways planned for 260 locations, new hotels will come up, further bolstering industry.”

of manpower in hospitality. More hospitality institutes should be established to impart skill training to aspirants. Quality training should be inculcated to the hospitality students.”

Gadkari also acknowledged the sector's commendable contributions to government revenue, job creation, and increased foreign tourist arrivals. "Your contribution to state and Central revenue is commendable. Your support in the employment generation is also praiseworthy. The hospitality sector holds immense potential for economic growth, and your efforts are a testament to that promise. Because of your contribution, foreign tourist arrivals have also increased. By fostering a vibrant industry, you play a crucial role in driving our country's growth and ensuring a sustainable future," Gadkari observed. □





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# Domestic tourists driving hospitality

Over past decade, transformative infrastructure projects have positioned India as major travel destination, says **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**.



**Lipla Negi**

**H**ailing the contribution of the travel and hospitality industries to India's GDP, particularly their role in the economy's V-shaped recovery post-COVID, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, said, "The demand for inbound tourism has decreased as the number of domestic travellers has surged, along with their increased spending capacity. This rise in domestic tourism has led to substantial revenue growth in the hospitality sector."

## Rise of domestic traveller

Shekhawat highlighted the significant role of domestic tourism in India's economic recovery post-COVID. He emphasised the following key points:

- **Rise of the domestic traveller:** Domestic travellers have emerged as the primary drivers of growth in the hospitality sector.
- **The power of the middle class:** The growing middle class is fuelling domestic tourism, exploring India's diverse cultural and spiritual heritage.

## Decade of transformation

Addressing hospitality leaders and professionals at the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of FHRAI in Goa, he reflected upon the monumental changes that had unfolded over the past decade. "Under the leadership of Modi, we have witnessed transformative infrastructure development. Through our sustainable policies aimed at attracting global investment, we have become one of the largest travel destina-

tions in the world." He likened India's current growth trajectory to the 'golden era' of the past. "India is once again moving in that direction, and the world is looking at us with excitement and curiosity," he said, envisioning a future where, by 2027, India is expected to be the third-largest economy globally leading other countries to follow the footsteps.

## Shout out to diaspora

He outlined various government initiatives, including 'Dekho Apna Desh' and 'Chalo India', that have spotlighted India

“**Demand for inbound tourism has decreased as number of domestic travellers has surged, along with their increased spending capacity.**”

on global traveller's map. "Keeping the Indian diaspora in mind, Prime Minister Modi has requested Indians living all across the globe to inspire at least four non-Indian travellers to visit the country," he said, illustrating the government's commitment to improve India's positioning as one of world's top travel destinations.

## Government policies

Shekhawat also said that after making the move of free one lakh visas, Ministry of Tourism is also exploring the revival of top key source markets for India in association with Ministry of External Affairs. □





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# Industry icons honoured

**Late Capt. CP Krishnan Nair, Late Lalit Suri, and Dr. Ajit B Kerkar** received Hall of Fame Award at FHRAI Convention for their significant work in industry.



Lifetime Achievement Award was conferred to **Late Prithviraj Singh Oberoi**, Former Executive Chairman, EIH Limited. **Vikram S Oberoi**, MD & CEO, EHL limited, accepted the award



**Anju Timblo**, Managing Director & CEO, Fomento Resorts & Hotels was awarded with Hotel Entrepreneur Award



**Late Capt. CP Krishnan Nair** was posthumously bestowed Hall of Fame Award. **Vivek Nair**, CMD, HLV Limited, accepted the award



**Late Lalit Suri**, Founder Chairman, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group received Hall of Fame Award. **Jyotsna Suri** accepted the award on behalf of him



**Dr. Ajit B Kerkar**, Former Chairman & Managing Director, Taj Group of Hotels received Hall of Fame Award. **Nirav Gandhi**, Senior VP, HRAWI accepted the award on behalf of Kerkar

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# Hotel sector powers India's US\$3 trillion tourism goal

At FHRAI's Annual Convention, **Suman Billa** emphasised importance of strategic investment in achieving India's US\$3 trillion tourism target.



**Lipla Negi**

On Day 3 of FHRAI's Annual Convention, **Suman Billa**, Additional Secretary, Union Ministry of Tourism, inaugurated Business Session VI titled 'Shaping India's Tourism Journey' with an in-depth strategic perspective on the vision of a US\$1.3 billion tourism economy by 2047. He emphasised the critical role of the hospitality sector in enhancing destination experiences

and improving India's performance on the global tourism index.

Billa pointed out, "Our potential is enormous. We have some of the greatest attractions in the world, yet the tourist experience remains subpar. How do we ensure these attractions deliver a positive experience? The key is creating synergy between state governments and the industry. Results will only come if we optimise our actions across these stakeholders."





Taking a broader view, he noted, “Tourism’s contribution to India’s GDP currently stands at 5.04 per cent. For a country such as India, we should be aiming for a contribution closer to 10 per cent.” Drawing comparisons to countries such as Turkey (which sees a 15 per cent contribution) and Thailand (which sees around 20 per cent), Billa advocated for a 10 per cent target for India’s tourism sector. “To achieve this growth, we must rely on market forces,” he emphasised.

### Bridging demand-supply gap

Walking the audience through India’s ambitious vision for its tourism sector—a US\$3 trillion economy by 2047—Billa outlined the crucial role of domestic tourism in achieving this goal and how the hotel industry can accelerate progress. “While India’s tourism economy is currently valued at around US\$1.3 billion—on par with global giants such as the US and China—the challenge is to triple that figure in the coming decades. To achieve this, India must boost both inbound and domestic tourism, increase visitation by more than 10 per cent, and expand the country’s tourism infrastructure at a rapid pace,” he said.

A key component of the strategy to achieve this goal is scaling up domestic tourism. Prior to COVID, India saw two billion domestic tourism visits. Experts project that figure could rise to 20 billion visits over the next decade. However, Billa was quick to underline the pressing concern of the lack of good-quality accommodation to meet this surge in demand.

He asked, “Where will the visitors stay? With only 0.16 to 0.18 million unorganised rooms

available for accommodation, the hospitality industry is facing a supply-demand gap that could impede the sector’s growth.” For this vision to succeed, Billa emphasised, hospitality and hotels must evolve rapidly. “The government and private sector will need to invest heavily in expanding capacity, modernising infrastructure, and developing new hotels, particularly in underdeveloped tourist destinations.”

To achieve the goal of US\$3 trillion economy by 2047, he outlined a series of strategic measures that must be undertaken:

- **Inviting more investment:** He underscored the importance of enabling market forces and private sector investments to meet the burgeoning demand. While hotel occupancy rates are at record highs, the cost of investment has been made difficult by rising interest rates. “To address this, industry leaders have been calling for a change in the capital structure for hospitality investments, with more supportive policies from both the central and state governments,” he shared.
- **State and industry synergy:** Collaboration between state governments and the tourism industry was also highlighted by Billa as crucial. He called for state running its own campaigns independently, but in sync with the national tourism initiatives such as ‘Incredible India’. “A coordinated approach—where the central government lays the groundwork with national campaigns, followed by states and businesses—could significantly enhance conversion rates and streamline efforts,” he explained.



**Suman Billa**  
Additional Secretary  
Ministry of Tourism

“**Tourism currently contributes 5.04% to India’s GDP; India should target 10% contribution to better align with its potential.**”



- **Destination Management Organisations (DMOs):** A key idea discussed by Billa was the creation of DMOs, which are already successfully implemented in countries such as Spain. According to him, these organisations, led by local authorities with industry input, are responsible for monitoring tourist activity, managing infrastructure, and ensuring a sustainable and enjoyable visitor experience. “In places such as Munnar, Kerala, for example, local businesses face challenges such as garbage disposal and overcrowding, issues that could be better addressed

**Suman Billa emphasised critical role of hospitality sector in enhancing destination experiences and improving India's performance on global tourism index**



through formal DMOs,” he pointed out inter-linking the growth of tourism sector with local community development.

- **Building new destinations:** He further highlighted how India's most popular tourism destinations close to their saturation point. “The capacity of our existing destinations to handle more visitors is nearly exhausted. Several of our

destinations are already saturated. Hill stations, for example, are overcrowded, resulting in a sub-par tourist experience. It is time to start planning and developing new destinations, creating sustainable tourism ecosystems in these regions,” he explained.

To ensure sustainable growth, he suggested that the tourism industry should focus on



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developing new, lesser-known destinations. “This would help distribute tourism more evenly across the country, alleviating pressure on overcrowded destinations and offering visitors a more enriching experience,” he said. At the same time, it would allow smaller, lesser-known destinations to experience the economic growth propelled by tourism.

### **Responsible tourism**

As India prepares for exponential growth in tourism, it must also prioritise environmental, social, and economic responsibility. Ensuring that tourism remains sustainable, does not overburden local resources, and creates quality employment

opportunities will be critical. He also pointed out that tourism’s power to generate jobs must be leveraged not just in major cities but also in rural and underserved areas.

According to Billa, the growth of India’s tourism is a given, but the key question is: How do we ensure that growth happens within a responsible framework? “We must prioritise environmental, social, and economic responsibility. How do we ensure we do not exceed our carrying capacities? How do we create quality jobs, and engage local communities so they benefit from tourism too? The value of tourism lies not just in revenue, but in its potential to create sustainable livelihoods, he said.

To become a global tourism powerhouse, India’s tourism sector must overcome several challenges, including infrastructure shortages, environmental concerns, and the need for a more skilled workforce. “If we get this right, the next 20 to 30 years of Indian tourism will be unstoppable,” he concluded. 

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***According to Billa, the growth of India’s tourism is a given, but the key question is: How do we ensure that growth happens within a responsible framework?***

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# Positioning India as global wedding hub





Wed in India and Design in India initiatives offer hotel sector opportunity to curate, customise, and elevate their wedding offerings, believes **Mugdha Sinha**.



**Lipla Negi**

India, with its rich cultural heritage, diverse traditions, and modern facilities, has long been a sought-after destination for weddings. But now, the country must expand its horizon beyond the traditional one-time tourists and focus on repeat visitors who choose India to celebrate milestones such as anniversaries and honeymoons, believes **Mugdha Sinha**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism. While speaking at the 54<sup>th</sup> FHRAI Annual Convention in Goa, she said, “It is essential to rethink our outreach strategies and create a robust framework to attract international clients, particularly from the Indian diaspora. Interestingly, the Indian wedding industry ranks second only to food and grocery, with 54 per cent of people spending an average of 10 lakhs on a wedding. However, we have not fully conducted outreach for weddings in India in global market.”

The potential for wedding tourism in India is vast. “India’s appeal lies in its cultural antiquity, its rich customs, its food, and its unique gifting traditions,” she outlined. “Couples choose India because they want an authentic, culturally rich wedding experience. It is an untapped market with huge potential for growth.” With the rise of the ‘Big Fat Indian Wedding’, India is positioning itself to become a global wedding tourism hub. The wedding industry with its lucrative business potential, is one of the most dynamic sectors in the tourism landscape. She pointed out, “Weddings are not just a big business in India; they are a part of the country’s very cultural fabric, and the demand for destination weddings is expected to grow exponentially.”

#### Eyeing emerging markets

As part of its broader tourism strategy, the Indian government is looking to attract a wider audience through its ‘Incredible India’ campaign, targeting markets with large Indian diasporas—countries such as the United States, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. “We are not just looking at one-time visitors; we are aiming for repeat tourism,” pointed out Sinha, “People are coming to India not just for their weddings, but also for anniversaries, honeymoons, and family celebrations, following in the footsteps of the royal couple from Bhutan, who celebrated their honeymoon in India. We already have a template for that kind of celebrations.”



**Mugdha Sinha**  
Director General,  
Ministry of Tourism

“  
**Couples choose India because they want authentic, culturally rich wedding experience. It is untapped market with huge potential for growth.**”



## Sinha highlighted the importance of integrating sustainable practices into the design of wedding venues

She further added that, alongside established markets, India is also targeting emerging regions such as Latin America and Africa, where community-based wedding traditions are deeply rooted. These regions, she noted, are key to expanding the appeal of Indian destinations, as they resonate with the multicultural, community-oriented nature of Indian weddings. Shedding light on the government's future plans in this direction, she shared that a key goal is to develop new wedding destinations across India, particularly in under-explored regions, by improving tourism infrastructure and offering a wider range of cultural experiences. "We are focusing on destinations with proper management systems, where we can offer more themed wedding experiences—making them memorable for couples," she added.

In this context, the role of the 'Incredible India' portal is critical. The government is working to bridge the information gap that exists between potential wedding tourists and the businesses that cater to their needs. "We are developing the portal into a one-stop resource for wedding planners and couples, offering everything from destination details and travel diaries to booking requirements," she explained. "We are also inviting stakeholders from the wedding industry to join the 'Incredible India' initiative, helping to bridge the gap between the couples, the vendors, and the businesses."

issues. By integrating sustainable practices into wedding planning, we can mitigate these impacts and set an example for responsible tourism," she emphasised.

In line with this, the Indian government is also keen to make wedding tourism sustainable, ensuring that it appeals to the new generation of wedding



planners and couples, particularly those in Gen Z and the Alpha and Beta generations. These groups, with their increasing emphasis on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) values, will shape the future of weddings. "If we can position India as a destination that is not only culturally rich but also sustainable, we can tap into these young, socially conscious couples," she opined.

Sinha highlighted the importance of integrating sustainable practices into the design of wedding venues. She cited the Qatar airport as an example of how design can address practical issues such as crowd control and efficiency.

As the government focuses on sustainability, one area of emphasis is the design of wedding venues. According to Sinha, the 'Design in India' initiative, which was recently announced by the Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**, encourages hotels to collaborate with architects to design spaces that make wedding planning seamless. "The key is to make the process easy, sustainable, and adaptable to the unique needs of wedding parties and their guests," she said. ❏

### Sustainable success

From sanskar to sustainability, she urged stakeholders to adopt planet-friendly practices for wedding celebrations. "The big fat Indian wedding often leads to significant environmental challenges, including traffic congestion and waste management



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# Defining path forward

FHRAI Annual Convention united hospitality leaders, voicing commitment to advancing tourism and tackling challenges.



**Dr. Pramod Sawant**  
Chief Minister  
Goa

We are expanding our tourism offerings to include inland destinations, focusing on themes such as sea and wine tourism, as well as adventure and wellness tourism for our visitors. Our goal is to position Goa as a holistic tourism hub. We are also working towards becoming the model state for sustainable tourism, guided by the Draft National Tourism Policy 2023. Our Goa Tourism Policy aligns with the central government's agenda, focusing on five key

“

**Positioning Goa as holistic tourism hub, we aim to become model for sustainable tourism.”**

areas: sustainability, digitalisation, infrastructure development, skill enhancement, and employment generation.



**Rohan Khaunte**  
Tourism Minister  
Government of Goa

I would like to highlight this year's theme: 'Tourism in 2047 – Incredible to Inevitable India: Driving Growth and Sustainability in Mission Mode'. This theme resonates deeply with the goals we are setting for the future. India's tourism boom is captivating the world, showcasing our rich culture and vibrant adventure tourism. This theme reflects a commitment to positioning India as an enduring global tourism leader and most sought-after destination by 2047,

“

**FHRAI convention theme aligns with our goals, showcasing India's tourism boom, rich culture.”**

celebrating the blend of tradition, innovation, and resilience that defines our country's path forward.



**Puneet Chhatwal**  
MD & CEO  
IHCL

I think it is a remarkable achievement for FHRAI to bring 1,000 people to Goa and curate this convention, which brings together the best of the hospitality sector. When you look at the representation—**KB Kachru, Ajay Bakaya**, and many others—it is clear that FHRAI has succeeded in uniting some of the biggest names in the industry. With such a diverse sector—comprising restaurant and hotel owners of all sizes and calibres—keeping everyone united

“

**It is remarkable for FHRAI to bring 1,000 people to Goa and curate this convention.”**

is a huge accomplishment. My congratulations to the FHRAI leadership team for pulling this off, ensuring that even I was able to attend!



**Vikram Oberoi**  
MD & CEO  
Oberoi Hotels & Resorts

It was a pleasure to attend the FHRAI Annual convention. **PRS Oberoi** had the courage and conviction to do things that impacted many of us in the field. Tourism was in infancy in India in 1990s. He is no more with us, but he is here today in spirit, and we would do our best to take his legacy forward with the same dedication and passion he embodied. Oberoi's legacy is a testament to what can be achieved with unwavering dedication and a forward-thinking

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**Attending FHRAI convention was pleasure; PRS Oberoi's courage impacted many of us.”**

mindset. We pledge to carry forward his legacy of excellence, striving to set new benchmarks in the hospitality sector.



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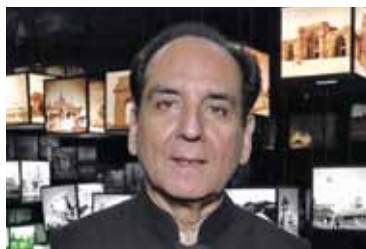
**Dr. Jyotsna Suri**  
Chairperson & MD, The Lalit Suri  
Hospitality Group

I am deeply grateful to FHRAI for honouring my husband, **Late Lalit Suri**, with this prestigious award. He strongly believed in the immense potential of tourism. As early as 2002, when he was a Member of Parliament, he said that all India needed was to develop robust infrastructure, and then nothing could stop it from becoming the world's top tourism destination. Associations such as FHRAI are crucial because they unite the entire industry. When we work together, we

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**Associations such as FHRAI unite industry, helping us understand challenges.”**

can better understand the challenges we face and bring them to the attention of policymakers, ensuring our voices are heard.



**KB Kachru, Chairman**  
South Asia  
Radisson Hotel Group

I am very happy to be here. The sheer deliberations that took place in the convention were mind boggling, beyond the numbers everyone is discussing. Everyone agrees that we must take India on this inevitable path. There was a strong consensus on the need to harness our collective strengths and resources to push forward. The shared vision for the future of our nation is both inspiring and motivating. This convention has truly been a landmark event, setting the

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**Sheer deliberations that took place in convention were informative and mind boggling.”**

stage for significant progress and innovation in our country's future. I am looking forward to seeing the impactful changes.



**Rajneesh Malhotra**  
COO  
Chalet Hotels

It is always wonderful to connect with industry colleagues. The sessions were very well organised, and it was encouraging to hear from the government representatives, bureaucrats, and industry stalwarts. They all spoke in unison about the power of the tourism sector, both in terms of employment generation and its contribution to the GDP. It was uplifting to hear such positive sentiments echoed across the room by different stakeholders. The enthusiasm and

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**It is always wonderful to connect with industry colleagues. The sessions were very well organised.”**

shared vision for advancing the tourism industry left a lasting impression, highlighting the collaborative spirit needed to achieve our goals.



**Nikhil Sharma**  
MD, and Area Senior VP, South Asia  
Radisson Hotel Group

Many congratulations to **Pradeep Shetty** and the leadership team for bringing the convention to Goa. As a Board and Executive Member of FHRAI, I can attest that organising an event of this magnitude, with over 700 delegates in attendance and a full house, requires tremendous effort and dedication. FHRAI is actively collaborating with state governments on key issues, and we hope to see more states adopting a progressive approach to tourism. The seamless

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**Seamless execution of this convention demonstrates strength and unity within our organisation.”**

execution of this convention demonstrates the strength and unity within our organisation, as well as our commitment to excellence.



**Chander K Baljee**  
Chairman & MD  
Royal Orchid Hotels and Regenta Hotels

The convention has been a tremendous success for us, with many people approaching us to explore opportunities to associate with our brand. It was well-organised, and we look forward to continuing our close collaboration with FHRAI, as the association is proactive and consistently represents the industry. The President of FHRAI, **Pradeep Shetty**, is also very dynamic and effective in his leadership. FHRAI's commitment to advancing the sector and addressing key

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**Moving forward, we are eager to build on the momentum generated by this convention.”**

issues has been instrumental in driving innovation. Moving forward, we are eager to build on the momentum generated by this convention. □



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# How difficult is path to sustainability?

Panellists at FHRAI's 2024 Convention emphasised prioritising Mother Earth over profits, discussing carbon accounting and green certification.



DDP Bureau

The first business session at the FHRAI Annual Convention, titled 'Guest, Planet, Profit: A Regenerative Approach to Hospitality', delved deeper into how sustainability requires more commitment from hotels than cost and design.

Moderator **Gurmit Singh Arora**, CII Indian Green Building Council & National President, Indian Plumbing Association, began the discussion by stating that with climate change at the doorstep today, hoteliers need to redirect their attention to sustainability and Mother Earth. "The CII Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) has made significant strides, certifying 12.3 billion square feet of green building space across India. From large-scale projects such as Yashobhoomi (India International Convention & Expo Centre - IICC) complex and the new parliament to smaller initiatives like the

Mopa Airport in Goa and IGBC certified projects demonstrate substantial energy and water savings, as well as carbon sequestration through tree planting," he shared.

## Tracking emissions

Speaking on how carbon accounting is important for the hospitality industry, **Piyush Chitkara**, CTO, Accacia, said, "We are sitting at a staggering 60 gigatonnes of emissions every year. Climate change is not a future threat, it is upon us. A few months back, we saw floods happening simultaneously in four different parts of the world, which is not normal, and we are not prepared for it. If COVID seemed like a big issue, consider this a bigger pandemic on the horizon, one that will arrive if we do not act now."

Talking about the future of tourism in 2047, he said, "Sustainability is at the heart of it. Recent research by booking.com surveyed over 30,000

guests and revealed that nearly 70 per cent want to travel sustainably indicating a clear demand. Hotel brands should not even be questioning whether to pursue sustainability, it needs to be ingrained in their DNA, starting now. Some might worry about the cost. But the truth is that sustainable practices lead to cost savings in the long run. So, it is not just the right thing to do, it is the smarter business decision.”

Speaking on how carbon emissions can be reduced for an existing hotel, Chitkara responded, “Even after a hotel is built, sustainability is not over. Hoteliers should focus on operations—optimise energy use, especially in HVAC; prioritise renewable energy sources such as solar power; consider sustainable materials in renovations and refurbishments; and reduce waste and optimise supply chains. Small changes such as adjusting thermostat settings, can lead to significant energy savings. By embracing sustainable practices, hotels can reduce their environmental impact and improve their bottom line.”

#### What after green certification

Saying that green certification is more than just a glass shield displayed at hotels, **HC Vinayaka**, Vice President, Technical EHS & Sustainability, ITC Hotels, claimed, “When a hotel proudly displays certifications from organisations such as IGBC, US Green Building Council (USGBC), or others, it speaks volumes about their commitment to sustainability. It is not just about achieving a certain standard, but about consistently striving for excellence. After earning such certifications, the real challenge lies in continuous improvement, aiming for net-zero goals.”

“At our hotel chain, sustainability is deeply ingrained in our DNA. We started this journey early on, recognising that it is not a quick fix. It requires strong leadership and a dedicated team to translate sustainability goals into daily actions. Whether it is energy efficiency, water conservation, waste reduction, community engagement, or guest experience, we strive for excellence in all areas. As hoteliers, we must continuously engage with guests and staff to understand their needs and preferences. Effective communication is key to building trust and confidence. By sharing our sustainability initiatives, we can inspire our guests to make more sustainable choices.”

#### Eco-friendly vs extravagance

**Behzad Kharas**, Chairman & Managing Director, The BNK Group, shared how the focus today has shifted from extravagance and opulence in interiors towards climate change and environmental intensity. “Sustainability is often misunderstood and misused. It is crucial to prioritise people and the planet, allowing profits to follow. Hotels can reduce energy consumption through solar power, smart technologies, and efficient design.

Low-flow fixtures and fewer bathtubs can significantly impact water usage. Food waste is a major issue. Portion control, flexible menus, and composting can help reduce it. By adopting sustainable practices, hotels can attract eco-conscious travellers and reduce operational costs,” he highlighted.

Kharas added, “The cost of sustainable materials has significantly decreased, making them a more viable option for hotel construction and renovation. Additionally, a wider range of sustainable materials



**Piyush Chitkara**  
CTO  
Accacia

“  
**Hotel brands should not even be questioning whether to pursue green initiatives, it needs to be ingrained in their DNA.”**







**HC Vinayaka**  
VP, Technical EHS &  
Sustainability, ITC Hotels

“  
To achieve sustainable operations in hospitality industry, a balanced approach to energy management is crucial.”

is now available. Overdesigning can lead to unnecessary waste and increased energy consumption. In fact, architects and designers can repurpose waste materials. Ultimately, a shift towards sustainable building practices is not only environmentally responsible but also economically beneficial.”

### Maintaining fine balance

With buildings projected to have more carbon emissions than vehicles in future, there is a growing concern for hotels in terms of improving bottom line while moving on the path of sustainability. Vinayaka shared, “To achieve sustainable operations in the hospitality industry, a balanced approach to energy management is crucial. On the demand side, optimising energy consumption is key. This can be achieved through energy-efficient practices such as reducing unnecessary lighting and HVAC usage. However, it is essential to balance energy efficiency with guest comfort.”

He further pointed out, “On the supply side, upgrading inefficient equipment, such as HVAC systems and boilers, is a huge step. Additionally, exploring renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power can significantly reduce reliance on traditional energy sources. Energy storage solutions can further optimise energy consumption. Furthermore, effective waste management practices, including waste reduction, recycling, and innovative waste-to-energy solutions, contribute to a more sustainable operation. By implementing these



strategies, hotels can significantly reduce their environmental impact, improve operational efficiency, and enhance their brand reputation as environmentally responsible establishments.” □





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# Indian hospitality industry

## Promising outlook

Collaboration and partnerships are essential to address challenges and drive growth within hospitality sector, reckon industry leaders at FHRAI Convention.



DDP Bureau

At the recently concluded FHRAI Convention, panellists **Patu Keswani**, **KB Kachru**, and **Ajay Bakaya**, along with moderator **Reyaz Ratan Mama**, delved into the current state and outlook of India's hospitality industry. In a business session titled 'Timeless Hospitality: Wisdom from Stalwarts,' they shared invaluable insights on the key factors driving growth, emerging challenges, and the path forward for the sector.

### Indian hospitality outlook

Starting the discussion, **KB Kachru**, Chairman, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, said, "The hospitality industry has seen rapid change in the last decade, far exceeding the previous three. Even with challenges, the overall trajectory is positive. Tourism, formerly overlooked, is now a key economic pillar. Its potential to create employment, especially in tier II and III cities, is immense. We, at Radisson, witnessed this and successfully expanded into these regions, recognising their economic significance."

Echoing similar sentiments, **Ajay Bakaya**, MD, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, explained, "While the

industry has seen growth, challenges still loom. Overcapacity in regions such as Goa and increased competition from emerging destinations such as Central Asia are concerning. The most pressing issue is the escalating labour shortage. To address this, we need to rethink traditional work models and embrace flexibility in work arrangements. By learning from platforms such as Swiggy, we can create more adaptable and attractive employment opportunities for the hospitality workforce."

**Patu Keswani**, CMD, Lemon Tree Hotels, joined the conversation, saying, "Just as China and Indonesia experienced tourism growth following economic expansion, India is now primed for a similar surge. Factors such as increased connectivity, rising disposable incomes, and a growing middle class are driving this trend. By understanding these indicators and capitalising on the opportunities they present, we can prepare for significant growth in the coming years."

### Capitalising on domestic demand

Continuing the discussion, Bakaya shared insights on domestic tourism as a key growth driver for hotels. He said, "Domestic tourism is booming in

India due to improved infrastructure, rising disposable incomes, and a growing middle class. To capitalise on this, the industry needs to focus on meeting the evolving needs of domestic travellers. This includes developing new concepts such as highway hotels and motels, enhancing restaurant offerings, and providing experiences that cater to local preferences.”

In response to how to attract domestic tourists on weekdays, Kachru said, “Domestic tourism should be our bullseye. Although international traffic is important, most of our income comes from local travellers. Hotels and restaurants should capitalise on this market by partnering with local experts. We need to adopt a fresh, mutually beneficial approach. By working together, we can create better guest experiences and improve industry standards. This includes focusing on the F&B segment and creating attractive packages for families and groups.”

Keswani added, “Domestic tourism is the backbone of our industry, our real growth lies here. The younger generation is driving the preferences in travel. They are more individualistic and seek personalised experiences. This shift, combined with the disposable income, is fuelling the growth of domestic tourism. To capitalise, we need to focus on quality and consistency. Upgrading standards and ensuring a consistent experience across all touchpoints is crucial. We must collaborate with the government to create a more suitable environment for tourism. By investing in infrastructure, promoting local destinations, and simplifying regulations, we can unlock the full potential of domestic tourism.



### Partners in progress

Kachru observed, “COVID forced the hospitality industry to unite and speak with one voice. We realised the importance of collaboration and identified key priorities. To attract and retain talent, we need to address issues such as fair wages, flexible work hours, and career growth opportunities. The industry must adapt to evolving workforce expectations and create a more favourable work environment. While the government has taken steps to boost tourism, there is still a long way to go. We need to ensure that these destinations have adequate



**Patu Keswani**  
CMD  
Lemon Tree Hotels



***Creating multiple brands is challenging; a focused approach with a few well-defined brands may be more effective.”***

infrastructure and services to attract visitors. To enhance international tourism, we must reinstate tourism offices in key markets and prioritise tourism in diplomatic efforts. By working together, the

## Major growth drivers and challenges

- **Tourism as key economic pillar:** Tourism, once overlooked, is now central to India’s economic growth, particularly in tier II and III cities. The potential to generate employment in these regions is significant. This shift aligns with India’s broader economic development, where regional and domestic tourism is emerging as a substantial contributor.
- **Increasing connectivity & disposable income:** Factors such as enhanced connectivity and rising disposable incomes are accelerating tourism growth, mirroring the patterns seen in other developing countries. This signifies an untapped market poised for growth, driven by both the younger generation and the expanding middle class.
- **Overcapacity & labour shortage:** The labour shortage is a pressing issue, which could impact service quality. The call for flexible work arrangements, inspired by companies such as Swiggy, emphasises the need for innovation in workforce management to keep pace with evolving demands.
- **Brand proliferation & market dominance:** The industry’s rapid brand proliferation raises concerns about brand dilution. Sector must ensure maintaining brand integrity and quality does not suffer in the race for expansion. This suggests that more selective, strategic growth may be crucial for long-term success. Such measured growth could be pivotal for maintaining a brand’s unique identity, ensuring it can continue to deliver quality.





Ajay Bakaya

MD

Sarovar Hotels &amp; Resorts

industry and government can create a more favourable environment for both domestic and international tourism.”

Bakaya added, “PPP partnerships require transparency, clarity, and decisiveness from the state. We have seen examples of unnecessary restrictions, such as limiting hotel operations or imposing rigid conditions on railway hotel projects. These hurdles stifle innovation and hinder growth. We, as an industry, must be more assertive. We generate significant employment and contribute to the economy, yet we often lack a strong voice and fail to advocate for our

concrete business plans and actionable strategies. This signals a potential opportunity for our industry. By working collaboratively and presenting well-defined proposals, we can influence policy decisions and drive positive change. It is time to move beyond lofty promises and focus on tangible outcomes,” Kachru explained.

### Is bigger better?

Keswani pointed out, “The concept of ‘lifestyle’ in hospitality is intriguing. While it is important to appeal to specific segments with unique offerings, we must not lose sight of the core fundamentals—good service, comfortable accommodations, and attention to detail. Creating multiple brands can be challenging, as differentiation becomes increasingly difficult. Perhaps a more focused approach, with a few well-defined brands, could be more effective.”

“The rapid proliferation of hotel brands in recent years has led to a race for market dominance. While this can be beneficial, it is important to maintain brand integrity and sustainability. Diluting a brand through excessive expansion or compromising on core values can weaken its position in the market. A balance between growth and brand identity can ensure that each brand has a distinct appeal,” Bakaya observed.

He further added, “The pursuit of mergers and expansion can be detrimental to many brands. Some will inevitably fade away. It is crucial for brands to prioritise quality and consistency over quantity, ensuring their long-term survival.”

### Brand power

Keswani pointed out, “As hotel companies, we are increasingly focused on management and branding. The concern is that hotel owners often focus on short-term cost savings over long-term brand value. This can lead to compromised quality and negative impacts on the brand’s reputation. To maximise returns and ensure the longevity of their businesses, hotel owners should consider partnering with established brands. These brands can provide valuable services such as distribution, technology and operational expertise. While there may be costs associated, the long-term gains, such as increased occupancy and revenue, often outweigh the investment.”

“While I agree with the general trend toward branded hotels, I believe there is still room for independent hotels to thrive, especially those run by passionate owners who are dedicated to maintaining high standards. It is important to acknowledge that running an independent hotel requires significant time and resources. Not everyone has the capacity to manage all aspects of the business,” Bakaya emphasised. □

“

**Rapid growth of hotel brands benefits market dominance but requires maintaining brand integrity and sustainability for long-term success.”**

rights. It is time to change that. We need to communicate the value we bring, both in terms of economic impact and job creation. By advocating for our interests, we can shape a more favorable environment for the hospitality industry.”

“Despite acknowledging our industry’s potential and contribution to employment, we have seen a gap between discourse and action. My recent encounter with a minister highlighted a shift towards a more practical approach. He emphasised on the need for







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# Wedding tourism Growing in importance

Industry experts highlight transformation of Indian weddings into immersive experiences, with luxury brands adapting to evolving client desires.



DDP Bureau

**I**n business session IV, titled 'The Big Fat Indian Wedding', **Mugdha Sinha**, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, shared the initiatives that have been taken by the ministry to promote destination weddings in the country. She explained, "To attract more couples, the ministry is focussing on culturally compatible countries and encourage groups to experience India, as Indian customs can spread over seven to eight days. This allows for longer stays and increased spending, as the wedding ecosystem is not just about marriage but also about the paraphernalia and attractions that attract foreigners."

She further added, "The 'Chalo India' campaign, announced by the Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**, focusses on the diaspora, with a large portion of the people coming to India for big fat weddings. These people may get registered abroad due to their OCI card holders, NRIs, or citizens. However, the Indian diaspora often perform rituals for extended families in India, such as South Indian and North Indian rituals. To target this segment, the ministry is looking at direct flight connectivity, air service agree-

ments, and visa easement. By focusing on culturally compatible countries and offering incentives and refunds, the ministry can help attract more couples to India for weddings."

Panellists discussed how leading brands such as IHCL, Fairmont, and others are adapting to meet the dynamic desires of couples and families, while also capitalising on the growing importance of weddings in sales and marketing. From new brands and expanded venues to an emphasis on understanding client psychology, each expert offered valuable insights into how luxury hotels can stand out in the competitive domain of destination weddings. Moderator **Siddhartha Chaturvedi**, Founder & CEO, Event Crafter, asked, "With weddings becoming such an important part of the sales and marketing mix. How is IHCL standing out in this? To which **Mausam Bhattacharjee**, Commercial Director, Goa, IHCL, replied, "We are a large company with a long history in India. We have four or five key buckets to offer from a venue or experience host perspective. These include experiential palaces, beautiful resorts, iconic hotels, and new brands introduced in the last decade. The company has re-energised the Vivanta brand, introduced the Gateway brand, relooked the





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**Rajiv Kapoor**  
General Manager  
Fairmont Mumbai

“  
I saw  
opportunity  
to transform  
wedding  
bookings.  
Our strategy  
was simple:  
offer same  
luxury  
experience at  
reduced rate  
in summer.”

Ginger brand into Luke's brand, and invested in a villa business called Amma Stays and Trails.”

He further added, “With expansion into new destinations, the company is creating reasons for people to find something within their home places. For instance, a new flight from Jalgaon has brought people to Goa, where they are keen to have a luxury hotel brand in the vicinity. The local diaspora is also looking for new brands to come into the area, exposing them to the market.”

Chaturvedi asked **Chetan Vohra**, MD, Wedding Line, “From a couple's perspective, every family is unique. How can you assist them in selecting the right hotels for their wedding? This is not about choosing the venue or destination, but rather the wedding planning aspect. The couple has made their decision and is now seeking guidance on the best venue and destination. How do you go about it?”

Vohra answered, “In India, there is a mix of “old money” and “new money”, with “old money” staying private and discreet while “new money” seeks attention and social visibility. This can impact the way a planner handles their clientele, as they must decide whether they are “old money” or “new money”. To understand the psychology of the family and what they want, wedding planners must consider the diverse mix of clients in the hospitality and event industries. They can recognise the diverse mix of clients and offer something for everyone. However, the essence and ethos of India and its offerings must be closely guarded, and fairness is a key aspect of their approach.”

He further pointed out that in the event industry, there is a vast mix of clients, and planners must



understand their clients' needs and desires to create a successful event. By understanding the psychology of the family and their desires, planners can create a diverse and enjoyable experience for their clients.

**Rachna Lucknowala**, Creative Director, House of Vivaah was asked, “What are the new trends? What exactly is going in the minds of Gen Zs and millennials? What do they want out of the celebrations?” She answered, “Destination weddings have evolved over the past 15 years, with parents now accepting smaller guest lists and reducing the number of guests and younger generations choosing smaller, more practical options. Gen Z brides prefer palaces, beaches, and mountains for their weddings, depending on their preferences. Winters are typically favoured for palaces, while April and May are ideal for mountains, and November to February are ideal for beaches. Goa has emerged as a popular choice for weddings, with the number of rooms, proximity to airports, and accessibility from home-towns also playing a significant role.”

Chaturvedi then asked **Rajiv Kapoor**, General Manager, Fairmont Mumbai, “You transformed Fairmont Jaipur into a leading wedding hotel in the country. How did you do it?”

To which Kapoor replied, “As a native of Delhi, I have always loved celebrations, and when I came to Jaipur, I was captivated by its culture, palaces, and scenic beauty. I joined Fairmont Jaipur during peak summer—a challenging time with lower occupancy and rates. Coming from a beach resort where I handled global weddings, I saw an opportunity to transform summer wedding bookings in Jaipur. When my team suggested that nothing happens here in summer, I disagreed. I mapped out our target markets across India and focused on building connections with planners nationwide. Our strategy was simple: offer the same luxury experience at a significantly reduced rate in summer. This approach attracted more bookings, leveraging Jaipur's allure year-round.” □







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# Indian brands aiming for global recognition



Hospitality leaders emphasise pride of creating and sustaining Indian brands that are rooted in local values, impacting both customers and employees.



DDP Bureau

“What makes your heart swell with pride?” This was the powerful question that set the tone for Business Session VII, titled ‘Building in India for India: Unpacking Hospitality Strategies’. Moderator **Bibhor Srivastava** invited top hospitality leaders to reflect on what it means to create and

sustain a brand that is truly ‘Made in India’. For these industry veterans, pride is not just a word—it is in every customer relationship, every job created, and every milestone achieved in building a hospitality industry rooted in Indian values and heritage.

Answering the question, **Vikram Cotah**, CEO, GRT Hotels & Resorts, said, “We have been in the market for 25 years and we have had generations come and celebrate their significant events and every time I meet these customers, I think that is a very proud moment for me when they say that their parents got married here and today we are getting married here and tomorrow the children are celebrating their birthdays there and that is a great moment for us plus our employees. I think, we have employees from the day one. We have at least 50 employees for 25 years.”

He further added, “So, that is what is the brand. So, brand is nothing but people at the end of the day and I think it is made of the guests and the employees and that is what makes me come to work every day with renewed vigour and feel very proud that we are doing something right.”

**Shwetank Singh**, Chief Growth & Strategy Officer, Chalet Hotels believed that impacting people





**Vikram Cotah**  
CEO  
GRT Hotels & Resorts

“  
**Brand is built by guests and employees, motivating daily pride, renewed energy and confidence.”**

by providing employment to them and making their future secure is something that makes them proud. “The fact that we have contributed to their development and growth is something that we are really,

really proud of. And since we continue on our acquisition spree and on our development spree, we hope to continue to impact that many more employees and make their lives better,” explained Singh.

## Key insights

- **Emotional connection and legacy:** Many hoteliers express pride in their deep-rooted connection with guests and employees. For instance, the ability to serve generations of families at the same hotels is a source of satisfaction and a marker of loyalty. This continuity also extends to long-term employees, fostering a family-like work culture that reinforces brand loyalty and service consistency.
- **Employment impact and community growth:** Hotel brands highlight their role in providing stable employment and career growth for thousands, impacting not only individual employees but entire communities. This commitment to job creation and skill development is viewed as a way to contribute to the socioeconomic development of India.
- **Skill development and education:** Some hotels emphasise their investment in education and skill-building programmes, such as setting up hospitality colleges and training programmes. These initiatives not only supply skilled labour but also empower individuals with limited formal education to build successful careers.
- **Indian brand identity:** There is a strong focus on establishing a global presence for Indian brands. Leaders take pride in creating brands that cater to Indian values and cultural nuances, positioning them as alternatives to European or American hotel chains. They emphasise the understanding of local preferences, which international brands may overlook.
- **Strategic expansion:** For growth, hotel brands are carefully choosing markets with a high potential for scale. For example, Chalet Hotels has focused on high-density, strategically valuable markets such as Mumbai, and has diversified its portfolio to include leisure properties, recognising the need for a balanced mix of business and leisure offerings post-COVID.
- **Market selectivity and diversification:** Brands are cautious about expanding into religious tourism unless there are additional attractions, as seen in their approach to destinations such as Rishikesh, which offers not only spiritual experiences but also favourable weather and outdoor sports.





**Keshav Baljee**  
Director  
Royal Orchid Hotels

“  
**Our pride  
lies in  
nationwide  
expansion,  
yet my heart  
celebrates  
father’s  
vision of  
founding  
hotel  
institute  
years ago.”**

**Suhail Kannampilly**, MD, Concept Hospitality, said, “Hospitality is deeply ingrained in Indian culture, and being able to capture that spirit within a brand that spans almost the entire country is something we are very proud of today. Looking ahead, our goal is to see an Indian brand make its mark globally. India, after all, is one of the oldest civilisations in the world, yet today, most of the largest hotel brands are based in Europe or the United States. So, seeing an Indian brand expand and reach new markets is what will truly bring us pride.”

**Keshav Baljee**, Director, Royal Orchid Hotels, pointed out, “Over the years, one of our greatest sources of pride has been expanding our presence across the country, with around 109 hotels in over 69 cities. But what truly makes my heart sing, and for which I give full credit to my father, is his vision of establishing a College of Hotel Management over 20 years ago. Today, as we travel across the country—and even sometimes abroad—we meet many general managers who graduated from our college and now form a vital part of the industry.”

“Additionally, we have launched short skills programmes to help individuals who may not have formal education quickly join the hotel industry.

Many of these individuals have gone on to achieve incredible success. Seeing this progress is immensely fulfilling because, for our country to advance, we must equip people with skills swiftly. I believe this initiative represents a key step in that direction, as it empowers individuals from all backgrounds to contribute meaningfully to our economy and the growth of our industry. This approach is more than just about job creation; it is about fostering a culture of opportunity and transformation that strengthens the foundation of our hospitality sector. And that, I believe, is what makes me most proud,” Baljee added. □





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# Data-driven future for hospitality

FHRAI inaugurates Centre of Excellence to transform India's hospitality sector through data-driven insights and leveraging innovation.



**Amita Pandey**

In today's data-driven era, where insights shape industries, the hospitality sector faces growing pressure to harness data effectively to meet evolving demands. Addressing this, FHRAI has taken a landmark step by inaugurating its Centre of Excellence (CoE) in New Delhi. Designed to be a research powerhouse, the CoE is set to transform hospitality in India by providing critical data, fostering innovation, and strengthening advocacy efforts within the sector.

**Suman Billa**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, after inaugurating the CoE, said, "The CoE has been established to further strengthen FHRAI's advocacy efforts. The CoE, a research arm, will focus on advancing knowledge, innovation, and excellence in the tourism and hospitality industries. This centre aims to serve as an industry think tank and conduct research for valuable insights. Its goal is to drive transformation within the industry and strategic relationships with policymakers."

## Significance of Data

Billa pointed out, "The significance of research and data in the tourism industry cannot be overstated. Being in the sector,



**Pradeep Shetty**  
Vice President  
FHRAI

**“With help of Centre of Excellence, we will generate analytical data that will help us represent our industry more effectively.”**

which is vast and multifaceted, it is essential to have accurate data to make informed decisions. While government data provides a solid foundation, it often captures only

one facet of the entire landscape. To truly understand the dynamics of the tourism and hospitality sectors, we must triangulate this data with insights from other industry bodies, international organisations such as World Tourism Organization (WTO), and other reliable sources."

Highlighting that the Centre will play a vital role in generating analytical insights that can guide government policy, Billa said, "This will allow the government to take a fresh look at the sector, recognising its true size and potential, and impact on employment and GDP. Ultimately, our goal is to build a data-driven framework that enhances the resilience and growth of the tourism industry, ensuring that it continues to thrive in an increasingly competitive global market."

## Big milestone

Expressing that the establishment of CoE represents a significant milestone for the hospitality industry in India, **Pradeep Shetty**, Vice President, FHRAI, said, "This has been a long-standing desire of our federation, as we have often faced challenges when approaching the government regarding policy issues, regulatory bottlenecks, compliance burden, and the overall ease of doing business. One of the major gaps we identified was the lack of



tion, and excellence, benefiting not just our members but the entire industry.”

### Future potential

Pointing out which area will be the initial focus for the Centre,

**Garish Oberoi,**

Honorary Treasurer,

comprehensive data to support our claims and recommendations. With the CoE, we aim to address this gap head-on.”

The Centre will act as a catalyst in creating a framework for research that can support policy advocacy. Shetty added, “With the help of CoE, we will generate analytical data that will help us represent our industry more effectively to the government. Every concern and issue that our members face will now be backed up by solid data research, allowing us to present a more compelling case for the reforms we seek. We believe this Centre will act as a beacon for best practices, innova-

FHRAI, said, “Our initial focus will be on creating reports on the vital areas that impact our members across different regions. We understand that each state has unique challenges and requirements, which is why we are committed to conducting state-centric surveys and assessments. This Centre will help us establish a strong foundation for data-driven decision-making, allowing us to present accurate information to both government bodies and stakeholders.” Even before the inauguration, the CoE has already created a comprehensive data on ease of doing business, which was released by FHRAI at its 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in Goa. □



**Garish Oberoi**  
Honorary Treasurer  
FHRAI

“With right resources in place, we aim to produce insightful white papers that will guide our advocacy efforts.”



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# Hospitality industry rejects intrusive surveillance order

HRAWI contends Maharashtra's AI CCTV mandate is excessive, costly, and unproven in boosting public safety within hospitality establishments.

**H**RAWI has vehemently opposed a recent directive issued by the Maharashtra Government, which mandates the installation of advanced AI-based CCTV surveillance systems in all licenced hospitality establishments.

“Real-time AI monitoring is unmanageable and impractical, especially given the high volume of data that would be generated across hospitality establishments. It would be humanly impossible to watch and analyse the data except for under circumstances that are post facto, for which a static CCTV footage stored data is sufficient. The regulation is an excessive and impractical measure that neither enhances security nor ensures timely closure of establishments,” explained **Nirav Gandhi**, Senior Vice President, HRAWI.

HRAWI contends that this mandate is not only excessive and costly but also highly intrusive, lacking any proven efficacy in enhancing public safety. “We respect the intent to boost security, but the mandate is an unprecedented financial imposition. With installation costs estimated to be more than ₹5 lakhs per establishment with an additional ₹75,000 as yearly maintenance cost that excludes 24 hours high speed internet and two TB storage, this requirement is simply



**Nirav Gandhi**  
Senior Vice President  
HRAWI

“**Real-time AI monitoring is impractical, especially given high volume of data that would be generated across hospitality establishments.**”

unaffordable for many small and medium businesses. Security being a state subject,

the cost of such an expensive and complicated system should be borne by the state,” pointed out **Chetan Mehta**, Vice President, HRAWI.

“The order is silent on liability issues for any breaches. The CCTV order also infringes on the privacy rights of patrons and could negatively impact hospitality businesses, as customers visit hotels and restaurants to relax in private settings. The mandated surveillance, including live feeds, real-time alerts and stored footage, could drive customers away, undermining the core of the hospitality experience,” said **Pradeep Shetty**, Honorary Secretary, HRAWI.

In a formal representation to **Sujata Saunik**, Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra, HRAWI has expressed its grave concerns regarding the order. The association argues that the directive was issued without any prior consultation with the industry and is deemed unreasonable, arbitrary, and imposes an undue burden on hotels and restaurants.

“Even assuming that the said order seeks to enhance security, such extensive monitoring and data handling should only be sanctioned by legislation, not through an executive order,” concluded Shetty. □

# Puri's new resort enhances leisure tourism



**S**wosti Group has launched Swosti Premium Beach Resorts Puri, strengthening Odisha's luxury hospitality landscape and positioning the state as a key destination for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism by combining cultural heritage with world-class amenities.

## Inauguration ceremony

**Dharmendra Pradhan**, Union Minister for Education and other dignitaries inaugurated the resort on 25 August 2024, highlighting its role in enhancing Puri's appeal for both leisure and business travellers.

## Next-gen resort experiences

Swosti Premium Beach Resorts Puri, the newest addition to Swosti Group's luxury portfolio, is now open for bookings. Located in Sri Jagannath Dham, the resort offers a unique blend of Puri's spiritual and cultural heritage with modern luxury.

## Versatile banquet facilities

The resort is designed as a leading MICE destination, offering modern facilities for conferences, corporate events, and weddings, with 6,000-square-foot convention hall and expansive landscaped lawns for versatile event hosting.

## World-class amenities

Swosti Premium Beach Resorts Puri's design celebrates Odisha's cultural heritage, with interiors inspired by Odissi dance, chandeliers reflecting Mahari art, and ceilings echoing Kalinga's maritime



**JK Mohanty**  
CMD  
Swosti Group

## Culinary excellence

Swosti Premium Beach Resorts Puri provides an excellent gourmet dining experience at the Beach Hut restaurant, wellness at the Ekayaa Spa, and leisure options including a fitness centre, swimming pool, games room, and kids' zone, offering enjoyment for all ages.

## Commitment to sustainability

The resort is committed to sustainability, incorporating eco-friendly practices such as energy-efficient systems, water conservation initiatives, and the use of locally sourced materials. These efforts reflect the Group's dedication and commitment to minimising its ecological footprint

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**Swosti Premium Beach Resorts Puri leverages eco-friendly practices such as energy-efficient systems, water conservation initiatives and use of locally sourced materials**

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legacy. Staff uniforms feature traditional Sambalpuri and Ikat patterns, blending cultural richness with modern luxury for an authentic ambiance.

## Elegant accommodations

Guests can choose from 125 elegantly designed luxury rooms, including suites that boast sophisticated decor and stunning views of Puri's Golden Beach. Each room is meticulously designed to provide a perfect balance of comfort and luxury, ensuring a memorable stay for every guest.

while delivering a luxurious experience to the guests.

## Legacy of hospitality

Founded in 1984, Swosti Group is a hospitality pioneer known for excellence, with properties such as Swosti Grand and Swosti Premium in Bhubaneswar, Gopalpur Palm Resort, and Swosti Chilika Resort. Swosti Travels and Swosti Institute of Management & Social Studies further support its success by training future hospitality professionals. ▣



# Hospitality sector champions democratic process

HRAWI's 'Pledge to Vote' campaign encouraged member establishments in increasing voter participation during Maharashtra elections.

**A**imed at increasing voter participation in the recently concluded Maharashtra Assembly elections, HRAWI had issued a circular encouraging its members to actively promote the 'Pledge to Vote' campaign amongst their patrons.

The circular outlined several strategies to engage patrons and underscored the importance of each vote. Member establishments were encouraged to display placards prominently, reminding guests of the voting day and motivating them to participate in the democratic process. Additionally, HRAWI encouraged incentives for voters through suitable discounts and promotions to patrons who showed the indelible ink mark as proof of voting.

"As HRAWI celebrated its 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we recognised the significant role our industry plays in promoting civic engagement. The hotel and restaurant industry connects with people across Maharashtra, positioning us uniquely to inspire and influence. Through this campaign, we



aimed to reach out to the patrons of all the hotels and restaurants in Maharashtra and amplified the voice of democracy," said **Jimmy Shaw**, President, HRAWI.

He further added, "The 'Pledge to Vote' campaign was more than an initia-

“**Pledge to Vote campaign was not just an initiative, but movement reinforcing hospitality industry's vital role in democracy.**”

tive; it was a movement that reinforced the pivotal role hospitality industry plays in upholding the pillars of democracy. Through active participation and civic duty encouragement, we contributed to shaping the direction of our country.”

The association also urged members to leverage their digital platforms for social media engagement. By posting regular updates, alerts, and reminders, the association hoped to spread the message of responsible citizenship to a wider audience.

The 'Pledge to Vote' campaign relied on the active participation of association members to achieve its goals. The association emphasised the collective power of the industry to make a meaningful impact, showcasing HRAWI's commitment to social responsibility and civic involvement.

The campaign demonstrated the industry's dedication to civic responsibility and support for the democratic process. HRAWI acknowledged the profound influence that voter awareness and participation have on the nation's future. □





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# Infinite growth potential

FHRAI Annual Convention in Goa proved to be excellent opportunity for exhibitors to connect with key decision-makers in hotel industry.



**Anthony Khoury**  
VP Sales, Asia Pacific, RMS Cloud

I think the key trend we are seeing in the hospitality industry is the shift toward digital transformation. While it is still in the early stages, we are witnessing a significant movement towards leveraging technology to solve many of the challenges hotels face. What does this mean? Essentially, hotels are turning to open cloud technology, which allows them to seamlessly view and manage the data captured by their systems. The goal is to use this data to better serve their guests, address their needs more efficiently, and do so in a more cost-effective way.

One of the main benefits of conventions is the opportunity to gain firsthand insight into the challenges hotels are facing, especially in relation to guest needs. It is

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**Conventions offer firsthand insights into hotels' challenges, particularly regarding guest needs, providing valuable understanding to improve services.”**

a chance to engage with industry professionals, network, and meet leaders with decades of experience. For instance, we attended a few talks where we heard from people who have been in the industry for 20, 30, even 40 years.



**Seema Khurana**  
Chief Executive Director, Venus Industries

Venus Industries, established in 1963, has a 61-year legacy in manufacturing tableware and hotelware products. We are honoured to be one of the pioneers in this sector, offering bespoke solutions to our clients.

Our manufacturing facility spans 150,000 square feet and is equipped with advanced automated machinery, allowing us to customise any design to meet our clients' specific needs. While we initially focused on cutlery, chef tools, and serving ware, we have expanded our offerings to include countertops and bar counters. Whether it is a particular theme or custom steel designs, we have the capabilities to create tailored solutions for a wide range of requirements.

“

**Our 150,000-square-foot facility, equipped with advanced automation, enables us to customise designs tailored to clients' specific requirements effectively.”**

Participating in events like this allows us to connect directly with B2B clients and industry leaders across India, helping us expand our customer database, strengthen our network, and grow our presence in the industry.



**Mohammed Sayeed**  
Vice President  
BuildTrack

Our brand stands out because of the comprehensive solutions we provide. It is not just about guest room management; we also offer a unified platform for managing multiple facilities, enhancing emergency response systems, increasing transparency in BMS asset management, and correlating real-time occupancy data with energy, water, and fuel consumption.

In the past two years, there has been a growing demand for real-time information. Hotels need to monitor room occupancy to manage emergencies swiftly, whether it is a fire or security threat. Additionally, transparency in consumption—especially for energy, water, and fuel—is crucial. Many resorts, especially those on the outskirts,

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**Hotels must monitor occupancy to manage emergencies, and ensure transparency in energy, water, and fuel use.”**

often face power-related challenges and rely heavily on DG sets. We provide clarity on fuel usage and help track energy and water consumption seamlessly on a single platform. This holistic approach supports efficient resource management and operational resilience. Ultimately, our platform empowers organisations to reduce costs, improve sustainability.



**Kuljeet Singh**  
Director  
Cleancare

From a small 20-room property to large 100 plus room hotels, the hospitality industry has shifted its approach to hygiene and comfort post-COVID. Even smaller properties are now prioritising in-house laundry facilities for efficiency and sustainability, ensuring the highest standards of service and hygiene for their guests. The rise of boutique hotels has further fuelled the demand for sustainable, in-house laundry solutions.

We are focused on expanding our regional presence to provide better support to our clients, with key markets for growth including Gurgaon, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. The convention has provided an ideal platform for us to connect with decision-makers in

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**Smaller properties are now prioritising in-house laundry facilities for sustainability, ensuring highest standards of service and hygiene for their guests.”**

the hotel industry and gain insights into evolving industry needs, and we look forward to continued participation in future events, reinforcing our commitment to growth and deeper client partnerships in these critical regions.



**Vijay Laxmi**  
Director  
Lords Wear

The culinary landscape is undergoing a transformation, with clients embracing a more adventurous approach to uniform design. They are increasingly drawn to vibrant, colorful ensembles that reflect the dynamism of their establishments. This trend has given rise to a surge in demand for trendy items such as denim aprons which are currently in vogue. Leather aprons are also gaining popularity. However, the orders we receive are in smaller quantities, which poses a challenge when it comes to incorporating all the designs, given the costs involved. That said, we are committed to meeting these demands. With our in-house factory, we are able to maintain control over both quality and pricing. It plays a crucial role in overcoming these challenges.

“

**Our in-house factory ensures control over quality and pricing. Lords Wear's kitchen uniforms are designed to last 200 washes.”**

Our kitchen uniforms are designed for durability, lasting for around 200 washes. The blend of polyester and cotton ensures superior washability, making the uniforms both practical and long-lasting without compromising on longevity and performance.





**Leena Mittal**  
Founder  
Herboveda India

Our outreach is steadily expanding, and we have now partnered with around 70 to 80 hotels. Our goal is to reach 1,000 hotels soon. A growing trend we are noticing is that more and more hoteliers are receiving guest requests for Stevia as a sugar alternative, which we consider a major achievement. In response to the needs of our hotel partners, we have developed a welcome drink that contains only two calories. This drink is an excellent sugar substitute, particularly for mocktails, which are typically overloaded with sugar.

We are also preparing to launch ready-to-serve coffee with Stevia. We invest significant effort into perfecting each product before it hits the market. For instance, the lemon-

“**Our coffee formulation is nearly finalised to delight clients’ tastebuds. Next, we will introduce ready-to-serve tea sweetened with Stevia.”**

orange drink is the result of extensive testing. Our coffee formulation is almost finalised, and it is designed to please the tastebuds of our clients. After that, our next big step will be introducing ready-to-serve tea with Stevia expanding its range to meet diverse dietary needs.



**Shrenik Gada**  
Partner  
Zanuff Industries

We manufacture premium products for hotels and cooking utensils specifically for the hospitality industry. So far, it has been a fantastic experience participating in the FHRAI Convention. This is our first time here, and we are truly enjoying the opportunity to interact with and showcase our products and brand directly to the senior management of the hospitality industry in India. This convention has allowed us not only to highlight the craftsmanship and durability of our products but also to receive insightful feedback and establish new connections, which are essential as we continue to grow and innovate within the hospitality industry. We are seeing a growing demand for high-quality, premium products, with a niche market looking for international-

“**We have noticed key trend towards neat, clean, and simple designs—classic, timeless styles that strongly appeal to today’s market.”**

standard items. One of the key trends we have noticed is a shift towards neat, clean, and simple designs—classic and timeless styles that appeal to today’s market. As a result, this trend has gained momentum, resonating strongly with the lifestyles of today’s consumers.



**PA Prabhu**  
Co-Founder  
Revac Systems

We have been specialising in kitchen ventilation systems for the past 25 years, serving both global and leading Indian brands. We supply kitchen hoods across India and also handle some export business.

One of the major challenges we are seeing in the hospitality industry is the demand for kitchens to maintain a temperature of 26°C. This has become a significant issue, both in terms of energy consumption and operational efficiency. To maintain such a temperature, a lot of air conditioning is required, which makes it an energy-intensive process.

The FHRAI Annual Convention is an excellent platform for meeting a wide range

“**FHRAI Annual Convention gave us direct opportunity to engage with hotel owners, which can be challenging during office visits.”**

of hoteliers under one roof. So far, our experience has been very positive. It provides us with a direct opportunity to engage with hotel owners—something we sometimes struggle to do when visiting their offices. It also fosters stronger relationships and partnerships. □

# SETTING NEW INCLUSIVITY STANDARD

Reinforcing its commitment to inclusivity for visually impaired guests, Taj Mahal, New Delhi introduces Braille menus across its restaurants.



DDP Bureau

**T**aj Mahal, New Delhi, has taken a groundbreaking step towards inclusivity by introducing Braille menus in all its restaurants, setting a new standard for accessible dining in luxury hospitality. This initiative was celebrated at Varq, the hotel's Indian gourmet restaurant, where the event combined art with accessibility, creating a unique experience for all attendees.


The launch event was graced by notable guests, including artist and Padma Shri awardee **Anjolie Ela Menon**, and **Shalini Khanna Sodhi**, Founding Director and



**Dr. Anmol Ahluwalia**

Area Director, Operations and General Manager, Taj Mahal, New Delhi

Secretary, National Association for the Blind India's Centre for Blind Women and Disability Studies. Also in attendance were visually impaired women from the association, marking the occasion with a message of empowerment and inclusivity.

**Dr. Anmol Ahluwalia**, Area Director, Operations and GM, Taj Mahal, New Delhi, emphasised Taj Mahal's commitment, stating, "At Taj, we believe that hospitality should be an enriching experience for everyone. The introduction of Braille menus at our restaurants further strengthens our dedication to providing a empowering dining experience for all patrons." 



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# MOVEMENTS

## BISWAJIT CHAKRABORTY

General Manager  
Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru



Biswajit Chakraborty has joined Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru as the General Manager. Chakraborty has over three decades of experience in luxury hospitality, having held leadership positions at Taj Hotels, The Leela, and Accor. He has also served as Managing Director at Hotelivate and General Manager at Sofitel Mumbai BKC and The Oberoi Grand Kolkata.

## ANNAM LUBANA

Director, Operations  
JW Marriott Goa



JW Marriott Goa has appointed Annam Lubana as Director of Operations. Lubana will oversee key operations departments, including F&B, Culinary, Front Office, Housekeeping and Spa. Lubana has been recognised for her leadership, driving guest satisfaction. She began her career in rooms division, where her strong leadership skills led her to positions at renowned properties.

## GAGAN KATYAL

Director, Sales  
Fairmont Jaipur



Fairmont Jaipur has appointed Gagan Katyal as the new Director of Sales. With over two decades of experience in sales and marketing, Katyal has a proven track record in driving strategic growth and elevating brand presence in the luxury hospitality sector. He has held leadership roles in brands such as Ananta Hotels & Resorts, ITC Rajputana Jaipur, and Marriott International.

## ROHIT CHOPRA

Area Commercial Director  
Minor Hotels



Rohit Chopra has joined Minor Hotels as Area Commercial Director. Chopra will lead commercial activities across the group, focusing on revenue growth, building long-lasting client relationships, and enhancing customer satisfaction. Chopra has 26 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He began as a Sales Executive in 1998 and later joined Hyatt in 2004.

## A BHATTACHARYA

Marketing Communications Manager, Hyatt  
Centric Ballygunge Kolkata



Anwesha Bhattacharya has joined Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata as Marketing Communications Manager. With over five years of experience in Marketing and Public Relations, Bhattacharya is known for her expertise in brand building and strategic communication. She will oversee the hotel's marketing, branding, and communications strategy.

## SAKSHI SARMANDAL

Director, Talent & Culture  
Machan Resorts LLP



Machan Resorts LLP has announced the appointment of Sakshi Sarmandal as the Director of Talent and Culture, a role she will lead in enhancing the company's people-centric culture. With a Business Administration degree and a specialisation in Human Resource from The Welingkar Institute of Management Studies, Sarmandal brings a wealth of expertise in hospitality. 



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