

# HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA

# fhraimagazine

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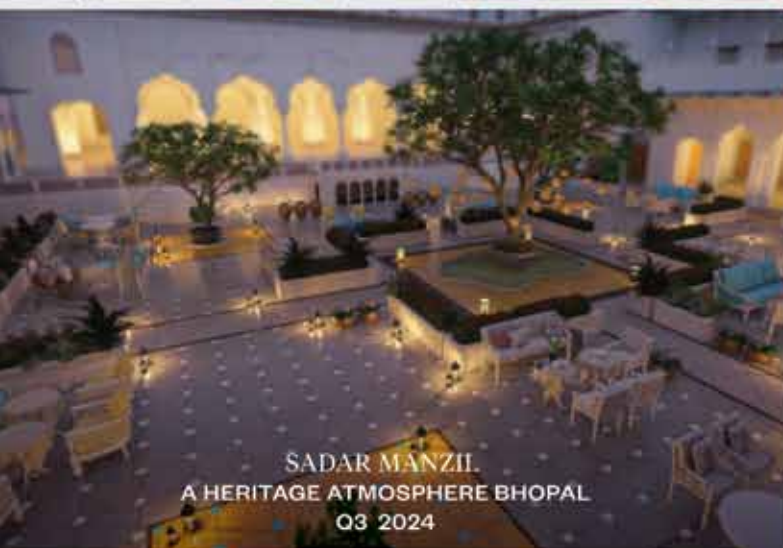


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*Dear esteemed FHRAI Members,*

I hope this letter finds you well. On behalf of the FHRAI, I would like to share some significant updates regarding recent developments and ongoing efforts to address pertinent issues affecting our industry.

On 11 March 2024, a delegation from FHRAI had a fruitful meeting with **Javed Akhtar**, Chairman, Indian Performing Right Society (IPRS). During this meeting, we expressed our appreciation for the transparent functioning of IPRS. The meeting also discussed about the areas of collaboration between FHRAI and IPRS for the benefit of the members of the organizations. The meeting also brought attention to the issue of hotel owners being unfairly targeted.

Considering these challenges, FHRAI is taking proactive steps to advocate for the rights of the hospitality sector. We have initiated legal action to seek relief from adverse provisions imposed by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Government of India, which have disproportionately burdened our industry. Despite our persistent efforts to engage with concerned authorities, relief has not been forthcoming, necessitating legal intervention to ensure fair treatment for our members.

We understand the importance of simplifying regulatory processes to facilitate

the smooth operation of businesses in the hospitality sector. In response to a recent inquiry from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, regarding the simplification of Form C for foreign guests, FHRAI has provided valuable feedback and suggestions to streamline the process and minimise administrative burdens for our members.

Furthermore, I am pleased to announce the launch of a leadership column, Hospitality Highwire - Heroes Insight in the FHRAI magazine, where industry leaders will share their insights and perspectives on key issues and trends impacting our sector. This platform will provide an opportunity for knowledge sharing and collaboration among industry stakeholders.

As we continue to navigate through these challenges, FHRAI remains committed to advocating for the interests of its members and fostering a conducive regulatory environment for the growth of the hospitality sector in India. Together, we can overcome obstacles and emerge stronger than ever before.

Finally, we look forward to see you at the 54th Annual Convention of FHRAI, which will be held in Goa from 16 to 18 October 2024 at The Taj Cidade de Goa Convention Centre.

Thank you for your continued support.

*With best regards,*  
**Pradeep Shetty**  
President, FHRAI



**Pradeep Shetty**  
President,  
FHRAI

**“ We have initiated legal action to seek relief from adverse provisions imposed by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, which have disproportionately burdened our industry ”**





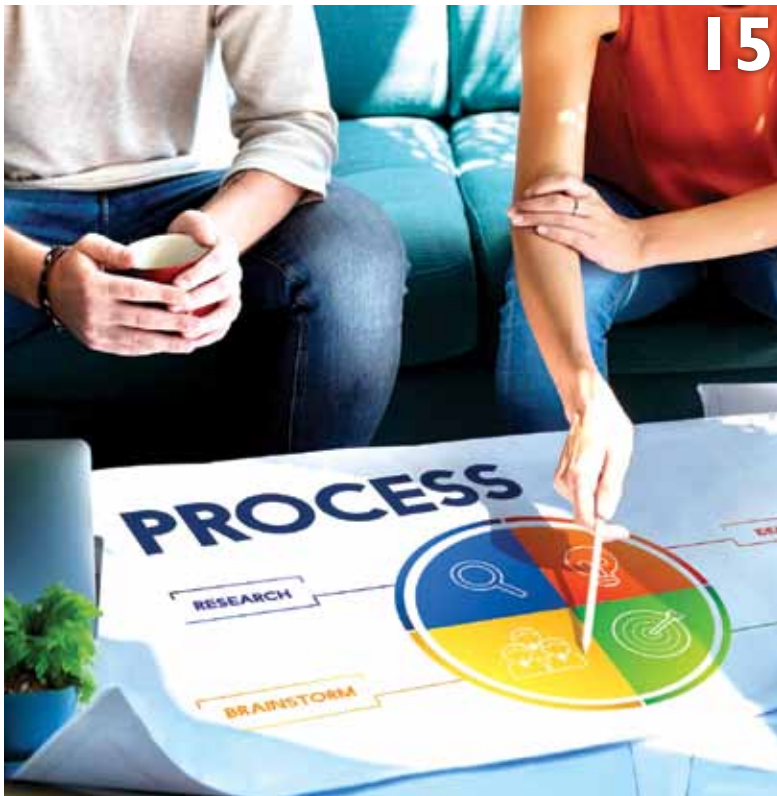
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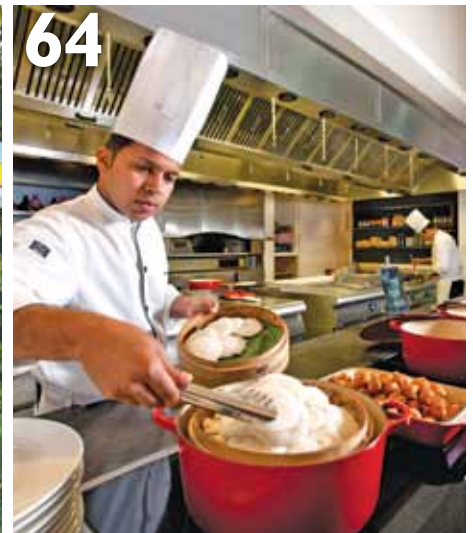
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#### THE FEDERATION OF HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATIONS OF INDIA

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# FHRAI CHALLENGES DGFT RULES

Federation files writ petition in Delhi HC challenging DGFT's adverse provisions targeting hospitality sector amidst ongoing economic challenges.

In a bold move, FHRAI has initiated legal action against Directorate General of Foreign Trade's (DGFT) detrimental provisions targeting the hospitality sector. This comes as the industry continues to grapple with a myriad of economic challenges stemming from global recession, terrorist attacks, and the COVID pandemic.

**Pradeep Shetty**, President, FHRAI, emphasised the urgent need for relief. He confirmed, "After careful consideration and in response to numerous appeals from our members, FHRAI has decided to file a writ petition in the Delhi High Court. The hospitality sector must receive fair treatment under the foreign trade policy, especially considering the adverse impact of recent economic challenges. We aim to ensure that our members are shielded from undue prosecution and that the hotel sector is accorded the same privileges as other export-oriented industries. We trust that the legal action will pave the way for equitable relief and a level-playing field for our stakeholders."

The Federation has advocated for relief for the hospitality sector through persistent representations since 2017. Despite sustained efforts, the sector still needs to receive the necessary relaxations, prompting FHRAI to seek legal intervention.



**Pradeep Shetty**  
President  
FHRAI

**Hospitality sector must receive fair treatment under foreign trade policy, especially considering adverse impact of recent economic challenges**

FHRAI has maintained that "one of the primary areas of contention has been the lack of relief granted to the hospitality industry under the Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) Scheme. Despite repeated requests, the sector has not received any respite, further exacerbating the financial woes of the industry".

The other main concern which has been emphasised by the Federation is

"DGFT, in 2007-8 in the new EXIM policy, introduced an additional condition which not only meant that over and above the primary condition, the industry need to comply with a secondary condition of maintaining 3 years average past performance continuously over and above the specific EO and the average has to be maintained for the entire block of 8/6 years till the redemption of licence. Unfortunately, post the introduction of the secondary condition, the hospitality industry suffered a huge decline and thereby reduction in the FOREX due to which the industry has not been able to fulfill the secondary condition of maintaining the 3 years average past performance".

FHRAI emphasises that the hospitality sector has been disproportionately impacted by economic downturns, resulting in a decline in foreign earnings. This decline has been well-documented, with Federation submitting comprehensive reports and conducting surveys illustrating the challenges faced by hoteliers. The Federation highlights that other export sectors have received relaxation under Para 5.19 of the Handbook of Procedures 2015-2020, where total exports have declined by more than 5 per cent. However, the hospitality sector has been unfairly excluded from such provisions. □



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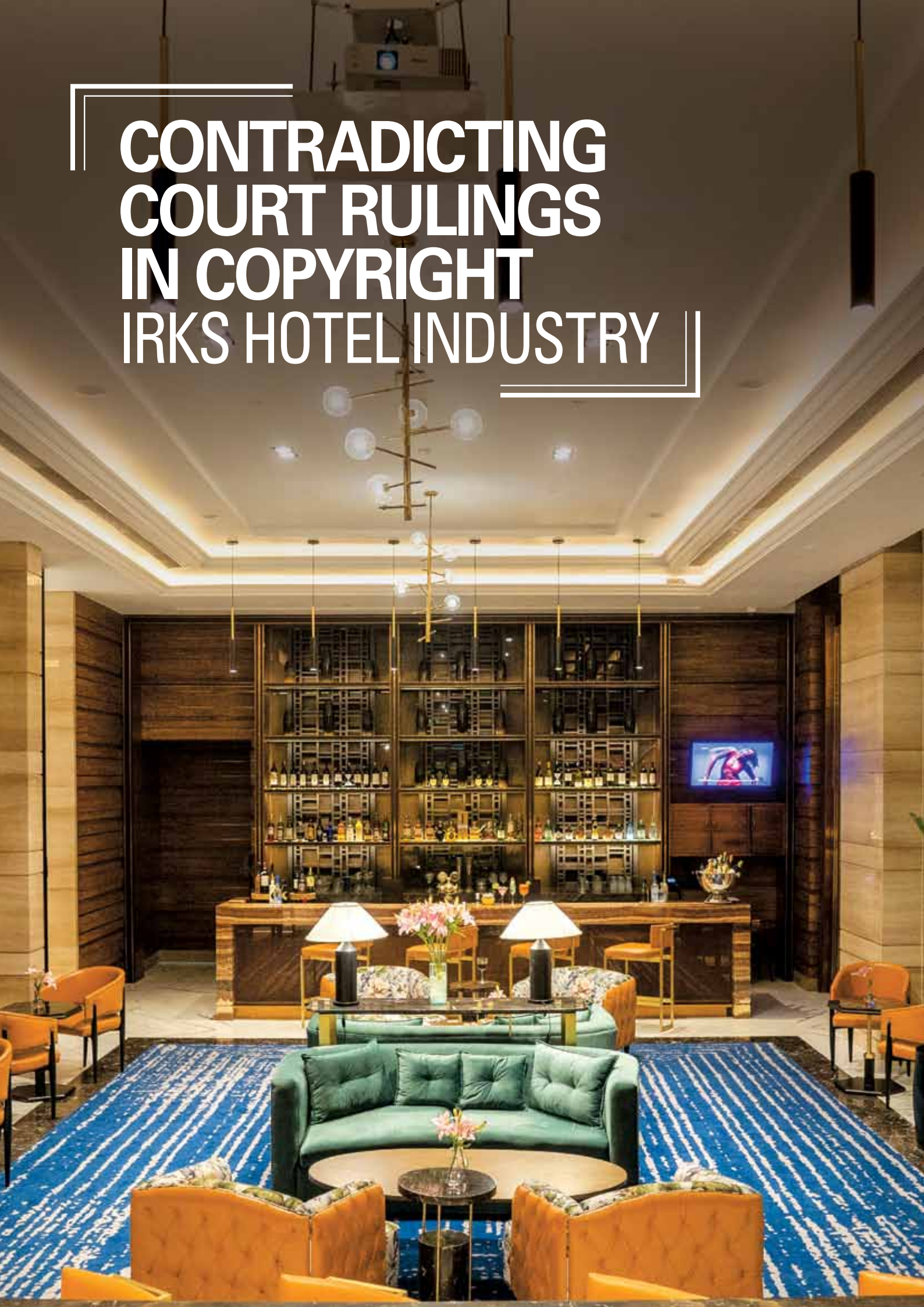
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# CONTRADICTING COURT RULINGS IN COPYRIGHT IRKS HOTEL INDUSTRY





## Hotels & restaurants are facing challenges due to conflicting judgments on Copyright Act, leading to harassment by unauthorised collection agents.

While the hotels and restaurants nationwide are experiencing continuous harassment at the hands of unauthorised collection agents purportedly acting under assignment deeds, as permitted by Section 30 of the Copyright Act, two conflicting judgments on this matter by two high courts in the country has made the situation more complex and vulnerable for the industry.

On the one hand, the Madras High Court in the cases of *Novex Communications Pvt. Ltd. vs. DXC Technology Pvt. Ltd.* and *Novex Communications Pvt. Ltd. vs. Cognizant Technologies Solutions India Pvt. Ltd.*, made significant observations regarding the interpretation of Section 33(1) of the Copyright Act and its Second Proviso. These provisions explicitly state that the business of licencing shall exclusively be

**A centralised society should collect licence fees exclusively; no others should be permitted to collect for the same works**

carried out through a registered copyright society. The Court emphasised the term “only” to underscore that copyright societies alone are authorised to engage in the granting of licences. Based on the decisions, the Court concluded that entities similar to Novex do not fall within the purview of Section 30 of the Act. Since Novex is involved in the business of copyright licencing, it was legally barred from issuing licences for the exploitation of rights in sound recordings in light of Section 33(1) of the Act, particularly the Second Proviso contained therein.

While on the other hand, the Bombay HC in the case of *Novex Communications Pvt Ltd. Vs. Trade Wings Hotels Limited* has held that that an author or other owner or assignee does not have to carry on the business of licencing his works only through a copyright society. Since, once an owner withdraws its authorisation from a copyright society, the owner can independently exercise his rights under Section 30 of the Act to grant licences as he deems appropriate. It could never have been the intention of the legislature that once an author or owner withdraws the authorisation from a copyright society then that work cannot be licenced by anyone, especially an owner. Such an interpretation would undermine public interest in making available the copyrighted work to members of public. An appeal against the order of the Bombay High Court has been filed by HRAWI and the outcome is being awaited.





### Divergent views

Taking benefit of the divergent views expressed by the two courts on the matter of preventing entities from carrying out the business of copyright in the garb of assignments, the copyright agents and assignees make all such efforts to extort royalties from hotels and restaurants even when they are not the end users of copyright.

### Direct demands

Several copyright owners, either claiming they are not part of the copyright society or asserting they are not being paid by the copyright societies, are directly seeking payment of license fees from hotels and restaurants.

### Double-edged sword

For this purpose, they rely on Section 30 of the Act, claiming to be as either authorised agents or assignees to demand licence fees from the hospitality industry. This is in addition to the existing copyright society. Section 30 is a general provision under the Act and the same cannot apply where for the nature of work (in this case music or songs), are already being licenced by a copyright society. Additionally, many of the copyright owners appear to be giving their rights to col-

lection agents who are only interested in maximising their revenue without any concern for the rights of either the owners or the users of the copyright.

### Undermining purpose of Act

Moreover, this entire process undermines the purpose of the Act, which aims for copyright users to seek and obtain licenses from a single copyright society at a reasonable price. As a result, hotels and restaurants are subjected to harassment by numerous individuals claiming rights over the same work.

**Copyright agents exploit courts' divergent views, extorting royalties from hotels & restaurants, despite not being end users of copyright**

### Unfair burden of liability

Another larger issue is that the hotels and restaurants are held liable of infringement of copyright, and are being treated as collection agents, even though, the hotels and restaurants just provide their banquet halls to hold events and the guest bring their

own bands to play music. Further, there are also cases, where the guest plays music which was not pre-planned or without prior intimation to the hotel or restaurant.

### Ambiguities in law

Considering the conflicting views and ambiguities in the law, the way forward to end the misuse of Section 30 is by imposing a restriction: copyright in a sound recording should be administered solely through a society, or alternatively, private entities must be restrained from granting licences.

### Centralised copyright society

Thus, a single centralised society should be the sole entity responsible for collecting licence fees; no one else should be permitted to collect licence fees for the same category of works. Relying on Section 30 of the Act will ensure a level playing field and bring harmony to the copyright market, which is currently in turmoil due to ambiguities in the Act and the misdeeds of agents and assignees.

In conclusion, the issue of conflicting legal judgments within the Copyright Act, particularly regarding Section 30, poses significant challenges to the hospitality sector. □







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Copyrights

# IPRS, FHRAI discuss copyright issues

Federation flags issues pertaining to hotel owners facing prosecution and requests a fair fee structure from Indian Performing Right Society.

On 11 March 2024, a delegation comprising of **Pradeep Shetty**, President, FHRAI and **Paramjit Singh Ghai**, EC Member, FHRAI met **Javed Akhtar**, Chairman, Indian Performing Right Society (IPRS).

During the meeting, FHRAI delegation appreciated and applauded the transparent functioning of IPRS much in adherence to the law.

Shetty informed Akhtar that music licence is an integral part of the events being organized in the hospitality industry. However, there is big confusion and uncertainty regarding copyright laws and their application in the hospitality industry resulting into unwanted disputes involving the copyright societies, event companies, hospitality establishments and

**FHRAI delegation appreciated the transparent functioning of IPRS much in adherence to the law**

the customers. The meeting also discussed the areas of collaboration between FHRAI and IPRS for the benefit of the members of the organizations in particular and copyright music industry in general. □



# Empowering leaders for tourism growth

In his guest speaker appearance at MTDC Training Programme, **Pradeep Shetty** provided broad understanding of current industry trends.

**Pradeep Shetty**, President, FHRAI recently graced the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) Training Programme for Resort Managers in Maharashtra as a guest speaker.

The training programme was held on 4 April 2024 at MTDC Residency Kharghar. During the interactive session, Shetty shared invaluable insights garnered from his extensive experience in the hospitality industry. He delved into various aspects of the industry, offering a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape and future trends. His expertise provided attendees with a holistic view of the challenges and opportunities prevalent in the sector.

Shetty emphasised the importance of imbuing the ethos of “Athithi Devo



**Pradeep Shetty**  
President  
FHRAI

Bhava” within MTDC resorts to create memorable experiences for visitors, ultimately contributing to the growth and development of Maharashtra’s tourism sector. This Indian philosophy underscores the significance of treating guests with utmost respect and hospitality.

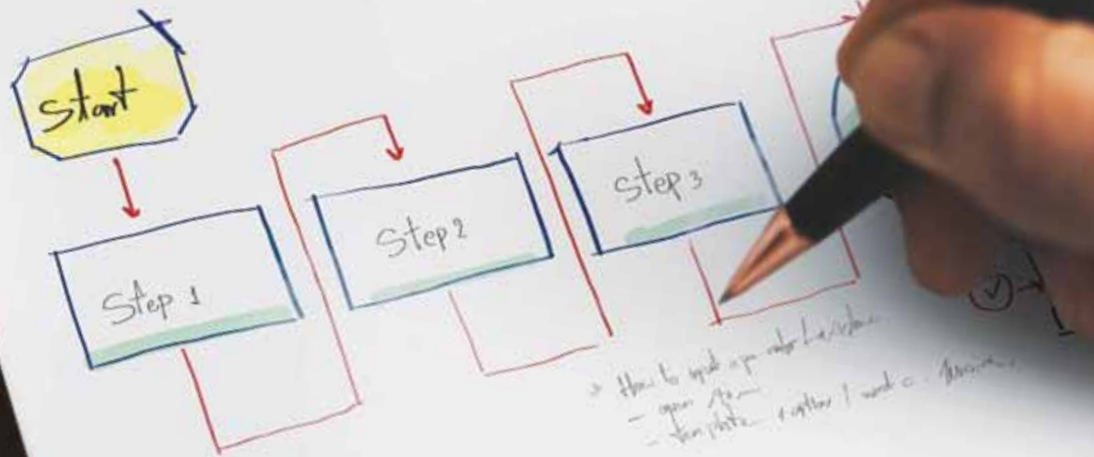
**Shetty emphasised importance of imbuing ethos of “Athithi Devo Bhava” within MTDC resorts to create memorable experiences for visitors**

Shetty’s participation as a guest speaker at the programme was a resounding success. His expertise, coupled with his passion for the hospitality industry, left an indelible impression on all those in attendance.

As Maharashtra continues to position itself as a leading tourist destination, collaborations between industry stalwarts like Shetty and organizations like MTDC will play a pivotal role in shaping its hospitality landscape for years to come. □



# Modernise Form C FHRAI to MOT



Federation recommends measures for simplification of Form C to enhance ease of doing business in hospitality sector.

FHRAI has submitted suggestions for simplification of Form C for higher accuracy and elimination of redundant data on the foreign guests to **Anubhav Saxena**, Under Secretary, Quality & Standards Division, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Here the proposals put forward by the FHRAI:

- Primarily, simplification of Form C will be a positive measure in improving the ease of doing business in the hospitality sector.
- The Form C portal's integration with FRRO's passport and visa database, allows guests to enter their details when checking into a hotel. This will reduce data entry workload for hotel staff and FRRO personnel, while ensuring data maintenance accuracy.
- Eliminating the requirement for maintaining a Form B register alongside the digital Form C should also be considered. As all Form C are now available online, there is no practical need for hard copies to be kept on file for a minimum of one year.

This practice not only consumes unnecessary manpower but also results in wastage of stationery resources. Instead, FRRO and hotel staff should be able to access and verify Form C digitally at any time, 24x7.

## Eliminating the requirement for maintaining a Form B register alongside the digital Form C should also be considered

- There have been reports of FRRO officials allegedly harassing hotels for Form C entries even for non-staying guests. Fake summons and notices are served to disrupt the operations of legitimate businesses and create unnecessary tensions within the community.
- Modification for same-day data fed should be allowed.
- Session expiry time should be extended because when there are 3 or more Form C

to be done the data is lost when the session is expired.

- Sometimes it is difficult to search specific Form C (Print Form C (Bulk Print)). Therefore, an option should be provided to search with the name or passport number (Print Form C (Bulk Print)).
- Uploading photo with such less size is too difficult on the present system. So, once it is automated, hotels will not have to face all these issues.
- Reporting portal is often found as erratic. When the reporting portal is erratic the ticket created is not acknowledged. Reporting portal must be updated to generate auto responses.
- It is rampant that in pilgrimage towns, domestic households, or owners, rent their properties wholly or partially to short term to long term stays. This practice needs to be monitored vigilantly and these landlords need to be identified and monitored for their reporting in Form C.

# SUSTAINED GROWTH BUT CHALLENGES PERSIST



India's hospitality industry shows resilience amid evolving global travel dynamics. Despite challenges, strategic planning promise a prosperous future, writes **K B Kachru**.

## **Hospitality Highwire - Heroes Insight**

*From this issue, FHRAI magazine is introducing column titled Hospitality Highwire - Heroes Insight. The column will feature experiences and perspectives on various facets of the hospitality sector from industry's top leaders. This initiative is part of FHRAI's vision plan to foster knowledge-sharing and promote insightful discussions within the hospitality industry.*

Amidst the ever-evolving landscape of global travel, the hospitality industry continues to stand as a testament to resilience and adaptation. India's hospitality industry witnessed a remarkable resurgence in 2023, marked by an increase in demand for staycations, air travel, and experiential trips, making it a blockbuster year for tourism and hospitality sectors. As we approach the end of the first quarter of 2024, the industry is experiencing sustained growth, particularly in domestic travel, along with high demand for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE). The Indian hotel industry is expected to report a 7-9 per cent revenue growth in FY2025, over the 14-16 per cent growth expected in FY2024, as recently indicated by ICRA. Average room rates (ARRs) are set for a significant increase, reaching ₹7,800-8,000 in FY2025, edging closer



**K B Kachru**

Chairman Emeritus &  
Principal Advisor, South  
Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

**India's hospitality industry witnessed resurgence in 2023, marked by increase in demand for staycations, air travel**

to the FY2008 peak before the global economic crisis.

## **Fueling domestic demand**

The impressive growth of India's hospitality industry stems from various influential factors, including a significant increase in revenue, driven by both domestic demand and a slight recovery of foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs). Last year, major global events such as G20 Summit and the ICC World Cup also played an important role in driving the industry's growth. The sustained momentum in the industry is being complemented by increasing domestic leisure travel demand, the thriving landscape of MICE events, including wedding and business travel, and a controlled supply pipeline.

Recent trends also reveal a robust demand for spiritual tourism with tier-II





cities emerging as growth drivers. Government initiatives such as Swadesh Darshan, PRASHAD, and Dekho Apna Desh have further bolstered domestic travel. The efforts to enhance inbound tourism by hosting international events have improved India's global stature as a preferred destination for various travel purposes.

### Roadblocks in industry's growth

Despite the industry's growth, several challenges persist in the hospitality sector in India. Advocacy for tax rationalisation, incentivised mechanisms, and accessible finance, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, remains paramount within the industry. Of significant concern is the restructuring of indirect taxes, notably the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on hotel tariffs and restaurant services. Reducing the current GST rate

of 18 per cent to a more competitive 12 per cent is essential for enhancing the global competitiveness of Indian hotels, attracting an anticipated 100 million FTAs, and aligning with international benchmarks observed in destinations such as Singapore and Thailand.

In a bid to foster self-reliance and local investments, the hospitality sector has been encountering the battle to be recognised as an infrastructure industry akin to sectors such as highways and ports. The benefits of gaining an industry status will allow hotels the advantages of lower utility tariffs, lower property tax, easier access to finance, softer loans, and ease of doing business thus reducing the cost of doing business significantly. This will also attract investments both domestically and internationally. The gestation period for hotels will reduce and make hotel investments







ence on the global stage. As international brands increasingly seek Indian expertise to manage their properties, a paradigm shift is taking place in the global hospitality landscape. This trend underscores India's transformation from a primarily domestic-focused industry to one that sets global standards. The country's thriving domestic industry coupled with its world-class educational institutions nurturing future hospitality leaders, strengthen India's position as a key player in shaping the future of hospitality worldwide.

A key factor aiding the future growth of the industry is the implementation of a controlled supply pipeline. A significant portion of the new supply is anticipated to stem from management contracts and operating leases, substantially mitigating the risks linked to asset ownership. Moreover, limited land availability in metro areas and large cities is encouraging a shift towards rebranding and property upgrades across premium or upscale markets. New greenfield projects will come up in the suburbs.

Technological innovation is set to serve as a cornerstone in shaping the trajectory of India's hospitality sector. Automation is rapidly revolutionising operations,

more attractive. Another challenge that lies within the industry is the lack of a streamlined approval process and the presence of hurdles for hotel projects and operations. Establishing a single window for approvals with a time-bound framework will infuse efficiencies and economies for rapid hotel growth and development.

Recognising the capital-intensive and people-centric nature of hotels, prioritising workforce skill enhancement through continued investment is essential for delivering superior services and experiences to visitors. Fostering sustainable tourism practices is critical for preserving India's natural and cultural heritage. The industry still grapples with the lack of allocated funds and incentives towards eco-friendly accommodations and tourist sites, ensuring the long-term preservation of India's tourism assets.

The attraction of visa-free travel for countries such as Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Kenya has fueled outbound travel demand, leading to an impressive increase in outbound tourist departures. To receive its fair share of travellers, India should follow suit and have well-curated marketing plans in target source markets. The absence of such initiatives creates a notable gap, hindering the country's potential to capitalise on the booming outbound travel trend.

### **Future of Indian hospitality industry**

The future of India's hospitality industry is also closely tied to its growing influ-

**Recognising capital-intensive & people-centric nature of hotels, prioritising workforce skill enhancement is essential for delivering superior services to visitors**





with self-service kiosks and virtual concierge services streamlining processes and enhancing guest experiences. Leveraging AI-driven systems, hotels are focusing on personalising guest interactions, ensuring round-the-clock accessibility and tailored assistance. Looking ahead, the integration of IoT promises intuitive control over room environments, while stringent security protocols address data privacy concerns. Despite these advancements, preserving the human touch would remain paramount, with dedicated staff training to strike a delicate balance between technology and personalised service.



The evolution of hospitality in India is marked by the emergence of innovative concepts such as hybrid hospitality and experiential travel. The rise of hybrid hospitality blurs traditional boundaries between living, working, and leisure, catering to the needs of digital nomads and remote workers. This flexible model, combining short-term and extended stays, will not only enhance guest experience but also drive hotel revenues.

The hospitality industry is slowly transcending from mere accommodation to

**Evolution of hospitality in India is marked by emergence of innovative concepts such as hybrid hospitality and experiential travel**

offering immersive experiences that resonate with modern travellers' desires for meaningful connections. While the industry has experienced significant growth, certain challenges persist, impeding its growth to even greater heights. As India continues to shape the global hospitality landscape, it is essential for the industry and the government to come together and overcome challenges to secure a prosperous and sustainable future for the Indian hospitality industry. □

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## STRENGTHENING FOOD SAFETY PRACTICES

HRANI recently conducted two FoSTaC sessions. Led by **Pritha Tripathi**, these sessions aimed to enhance food safety practices within the hospitality sector.

**H**RANI recently organized two successful Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) sessions at Radisson Blu Hotel, Greater Noida and Eros Hotel, New Delhi Nehru Place. Under the leadership of **Pritha Tripathi**, Deputy General Manager, Food Industry Capacity & Skill Initiative (FICSI) and former Scientist at Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), these sessions aimed to bolster food safety practices within the hospitality sector—a vital endeavour in safeguarding consumer health.

**Sessions were instrumental in equipping attendees with the necessary knowledge and tools to ensure food safety**

Participants gained insights into food safety practices, fostering awareness and implementing measures for enhanced standards in their establishments. The sessions were instrumental in equipping attendees with the necessary knowl-

edge and tools to ensure food safety. By addressing key concerns and providing practical solutions, HRANI continues to play a pivotal role in elevating industry standards and ensuring the well-being of consumers.

FSSAI has mandated training of all central and state licenced FBOs under FSS scheme. As per the guideline, all licenced food businesses must have at least one trained and certified Food Safety Supervisor under FoSTaC for every 25 food handlers in each premise. ▣





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# Bolstering hospitality safety measures

Eminent speakers at 'Empowering Hospitality' conclave highlight fire life safety strategies in shaping the image & operations of hotel sector.

In a concerted effort to bolster excellence, safety, and sustainable growth within the hospitality industry, HRAWI and the Poona Hoteliers Association (PHA) jointly organized the 'Empowering Hospitality' conclave. Held at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Pune, the event served as a platform for industry professionals to delve into crucial topics aimed at enhancing fire life safety strategies and understanding the classification and industry status of hotels.

Eminent speakers, including **Devendra Potphode**, Chief Fire Officer, Pune and **Shama S Pawar**, Deputy Director, Pune, shed light on essential aspects such as fire safety risk assessments, codes and compliances, passive fire safety measures, egress planning, and Fire Life Safety (FLS) audits. These discussions provided insights into ensuring the safety and security of hotel establishments, prioritising the well-being of guests and staff alike.

"The hotel industry plays a pivotal role in our nation's growth. Safety, particularly fire and life safety, is paramount in the hotel sector, shaping its image and ensuring successful operations. Adherence to evolving safety norms, utilisation of modern fire-fighting facilities, and staff training are essential.

**Hotel industry plays pivotal role in India's growth. Safety, particularly fire & life safety, is paramount in the hotel sector**

Maharashtra's initiatives, including licencing agencies and compliance with Form A/B, reinforce safety measures. Regular inspections and maintenance of fire-fighting systems are crucial and my team is committed to providing support and assistance for ensuring guest safety," said Potphode.

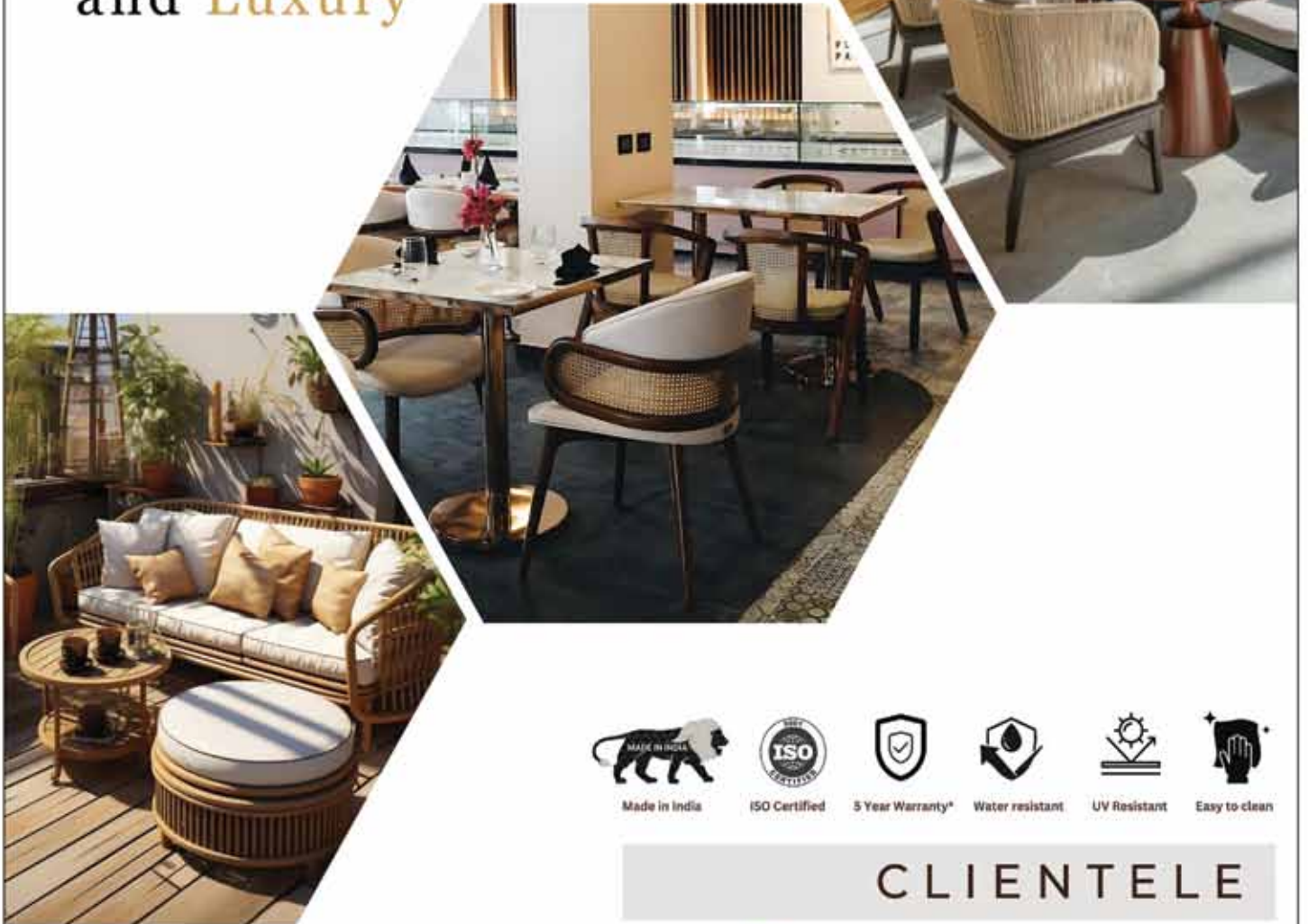
Pawar, along with **Subha Bhaskar**, COO, Qual Star delved into the intricate aspects of hotel classification and industry status, emphasising the benefits of classification and the significance of regular audits.

"We applaud HRAWI for their proactive stance on fire safety, a critical aspect of the hospitality sector. Initiatives such as these are instrumental in creating a safer environment for guests and employees alike. Furthermore, I commend HRAWI's dedication to advancing industry standards. The policies recently launched by the Directorate of Tourism, such as granting industry status to hospitality and promoting sustainable tourism through initiatives such as 'Travel for LIFE' underscore our commitment to driving positive change in the sector. Together, we endeavour to collaboratively create and foster a more sustainable and thriving tourism landscape throughout Maharashtra." averred Pawar. □



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# CONCLAVE RECOGNISES INDUSTRY STALWARTS

‘Empowering Hospitality’ conclave served as a crucial platform to honour outstanding contributions of professionals within hospitality sector.

In a grand celebration of excellence and dedication, the hospitality industry witnessed a momentous event as HRAWI and Poona Hoteliers Association (PHA) jointly organized the ‘Empowering Hospitality’ conclave on 21 March 2024. The event served as a platform to recognise and honour the outstanding contributions of professionals within the hospitality sector.

The event was graced by eminent dignitaries including **Devendra Potphode**, Chief Fire Officer, Pune and **Shama S Pawar**, Deputy Director, Pune. Among the highlights of the conclave was the conferring of awards to individuals who have demonstrated exceptional dedication and prowess in their respective roles.

One of the most esteemed accolades of the evening, the Lifetime Achievement Award, was bestowed upon **Suresh Talera**, President of Honour, PHA for his exemplary contribution to the hospitality sector. Additionally, **Amit Sharma**, General Manager, Amanora The Fern, Pune and President, PHA, was recognised for his significant contribution to the hospitality sector in Pune.

In addition to these distinguished awardees, several other luminaries were honoured for their exemplary contribu-



**Pradeep Shetty**  
President  
HRAWI

Events like this not only celebrate achievements but also promote a sense of camaraderie and collaboration within our community

tions to the hospitality domain. Among them were **Arun Nayar**, Past President, PHA, along with **Sanjay Singh**, **Sharan Shetty**, **Vinay Nair**, **Sumit Sharma** of Hyatt Pune, **Pankaj Saxena** of Novotel Pune, **Vaibhav Lamba**, **Santanu Sarkar**, and **Abhishek Sahai** of Conrad Pune, **Melvyn Saldanha** of Taj Blue Diamond, and **Dev Kumar**, AVP, Parc Estique Hotel. Each of these individuals has played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of the

hospitality industry through their dedication and exemplary service.

“It is an honour to be part of an event that recognises the exemplary contributions of individuals in the hospitality sector. The dedication and commitment showcased by each awardee, including Suresh Talera and Amit Sharma, are commendable and serve as inspiration for all of us in the industry. Events like this not only celebrate achievements but also promote a sense of camaraderie and collaboration within our community. I look forward to continuing our efforts to elevate the standards and excellence of the hospitality sector in Pune and beyond,” said **Pradeep Shetty**, President, HRAWI.

Shetty further added, “As we witness remarkable growth and evolution in the tourism sector, it becomes imperative to acknowledge the stalwarts of the hospitality industry. With forecasts projecting significant GDP contributions and employment opportunities in the sector by 2028, and ambitious milestones set for 2047, it is crucial to ensure capable leadership within the industry. Our upcoming convention in Goa aims to drive growth while advocating for best practices in hospitality nationwide, aligning with India’s goal of welcoming 100 million tourists by 2047 and achieving a US \$3 trillion hospitality tourism economy.” □







## REHABILITATION THROUGH CULINARY SKILLS

SIHRA inaugurates first skill centre emphasising the commitment to address human resource challenges in the hospitality industry.

The Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC), in collaboration with SIHRA, is organising a 30-day cook training programme for 35 juveniles from Vellore Juvenile Home as part of their rehabilitation initiative. The programme aims to equip the participants with culinary skills to pave the way for a better future. The inauguration ceremony, held on 8 April 2024, was graced by notable personalities, including **Venkada Subbu**, Managing Director, Darling Group; **Chef Thiruvengadam** from GRT Regency, Vellore; and **T N Sanjeeth**, District Child Protection Officer, Vellore, among others.

During the event, the participants were inspired by the potential career opportunities in entrepreneurship, encouraging



**K Syama Raju**  
President  
SIHRA

them to consider launching their own food outlets upon completion of one-month intensive training. SIHRA pledged support to those who demonstrate exceptional skills and receive certification from the Superintendent, assisting them in establishing their startups or securing hospitality jobs. The efforts of the organizers were acknowledged by Sanjeeth. On the occasion, special thanks were extended to Subbu, and the entire team from GRT Regency for their contributions in making the event impactful.



### SIHRA's inaugural skill centre

The inaugural SIHRA skill centre has been established in Manaparai, a village near Trichy, Tamil Nadu, marking a significant milestone with an intake of 24 students. This initiative stands as a testament to SIHRA's commitment and resolve to tackle the human resource challenges within the hospitality industry. With the support of

### SIHRA is organising 30-day cook training programme for 35 juveniles from Vellore Juvenile Home as part of their rehabilitation initiative

like-minded individuals, this marks the beginning of the journey towards bridging the skills gap. Overseen by **Arulmurugan**, a graduate in catering technology and coordinated by **Kapilan**, the centre embodies SIHRA's vision for excellence in hospitality education. The association eagerly anticipate expanding with similar centres, bolstered by the backing of hoteliers, across South India. □



**Arun Kumar**  
Principal, FHRAI-IHM

# Jump in enrollment at FHRAI-IHM

Despite COVID challenges, FHRAI-IHM embarked on its path, bolstered by significant infrastructural improvements with support from FHRAI.



**Lipla Negi**

**Q In 2021, FHRAI-IHM got affiliation with NCHMCT, could you elaborate on the institute's journey since then?**

FHRAI-IHM received affiliation with NCHMCT, Noida, to offer a three-year B.Sc. programme in hospitality and hotel administration, as well as an 18-month diploma in hospitality focussing on areas such as food production, bakery, and F&B service. Following accreditation from the National Council for Hotel Management, Noida, the institute embarked on its journey during the challenging COVID phase, undertaking significant renovations and repairs to enhance its infrastructure with support from FHRAI.

The challenging phase for hospitality education began just before COVID and has persisted since. Despite this, enrollment in hospitality management programmes has not shown improvement to date. However, FHRAI-IHM managed to achieve reasonable enrollment in various programmes in both 2022 and 2023.

**Q How are students at FHRAI-IHM receiving essential knowledge and skills?**

FHRAI-IHM is striving to enhance the

students' knowledge base and impart the skills required for them to excel in the industry. We regularly invite industry experts, either in person or online, to motivate students with their experiences in the hospitality sector and prepare them to serve the industry with high moral values, knowledge and skills.

**Opportunities for industrial exposure for students are facilitated by member hotels, which also enhances their chances of securing better placements**

**Q How are students' sense of responsibility and leadership skills developed?**

The faculty at FHRAI-IHM sharpens students' sense of responsibility and leadership skills by assigning them tasks regularly, exposing them to the industry through selective outdoor catering events at hotels, and providing them with strict guidelines regarding industrial exposure during their second year of studies. We believe that this exposure is essential for lifelong learning and will influence their interest in hospital-

ity management. We closely monitor their industrial training with the support of the relevant hotels to ensure maximum learning during this period.

**Q How is the institute working to offer training infrastructure, faculty development & industrial training on par with industry standards?**

FHRAI-IHM boasts an excellent training infrastructure spanning approximately 75,000 square feet, complete with a 130-seater boys' hostel and a 60-seater girls' hostel situated on a 7-acre campus. Nestled in the knowledge hub of northern India, Knowledge Park in Greater Noida, the institute is fully equipped to provide comprehensive training for the hospitality industry.

Faculty development is a key aspect of any professional education programme, and FHRAI-IHM sends its faculty members to participate in the faculty development programmes organized by NCHMCT, Noida, and other organizations from time to time. Opportunities for industrial exposure for students are facilitated by member hotels. This allows students to gain valuable insights into the industrial workings which enhances their chances of securing better placements in the industry. □



# ACCOR STRENGTHENS PRESENCE IN INDIA



Accor has announced the signing of a partnership agreement with EBU Estate Developers for the development of a Sofitel hotel in India, the Sofitel Jaipur Jawahar Circle. This luxury hotel is scheduled to open its doors in 2028.

Strategically located at Jaipur's Jawahar Circle, the hotel will feature 275 exquisitely designed and spacious rooms, each offering the utmost comfort for guests. The hotel will offer French joie de vivre and gastronomy, with four distinct restaurants and bars, where guests will savour a varied culinary experience tailored to their preferences.

**Sofitel Jaipur Jawahar Circle will feature an array of facilities, including swimming pools, a spa, fitness centre, kids' club**

"We are delighted to partner with EBU Estate Developers to bring the Sofitel brand to Jaipur and to celebrate a new chapter in our journey in India. Accor's offering is uniquely positioned to harness the power of Indian travellers and this new signing is a great illustration of our commitment to bring meaningful experiences, today with the Sofitel's French art de vivre. Accor plans to open 30 new properties in the country

Sofitel Jaipur Jawahar Circle is slated to open in 2028, offering upscale accommodation, French culinary experiences & extensive event facilities.

in the next 3 to 5 years and will continue to strive for excellence, making a positive difference to our communities," said **Sébastien Bazin**, Chairman & CEO, Accor.

Furthermore, the hotel will offer over 5,000 square meters of state-of-the-art meeting and banquet venues, providing the perfect setting for weddings, grand events and gatherings.

The Sofitel Jaipur Jawahar Circle will feature an array of facilities, including swimming pools, a spa, fitness center, kids' club, and ample car parking. The hotel's extensive MICE facilities, will be designed to accommodate up to four large events simultaneously. □



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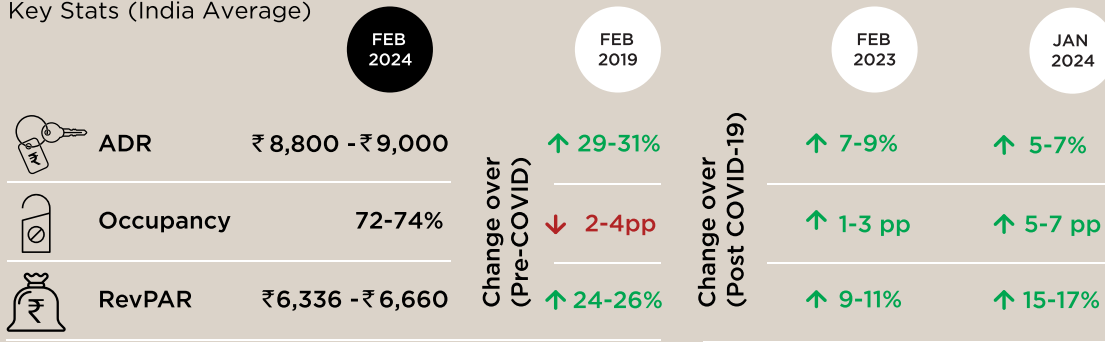


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## Hotel Sector

Key Stats (India Average)



<sup>1</sup> Occupancy change in percentage points (pp)

<sup>2</sup> ADR change in percentage (%)

Source: HVS Research

# Investor confidence in hotels on upswing

February 2024 saw a notable year-on-year spike in ARR across India, as reported by HVS Anarock’s ‘Hotels & Hospitality Overview’.

Recent data indicates that the nationwide hotel occupancy rates are inching closer to pre-COVID levels, marking a significant milestone in the industry’s recovery journey. Key markets such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai are leading the resurgence, with occupancy rates surpassing 80 per cent during the month of February.

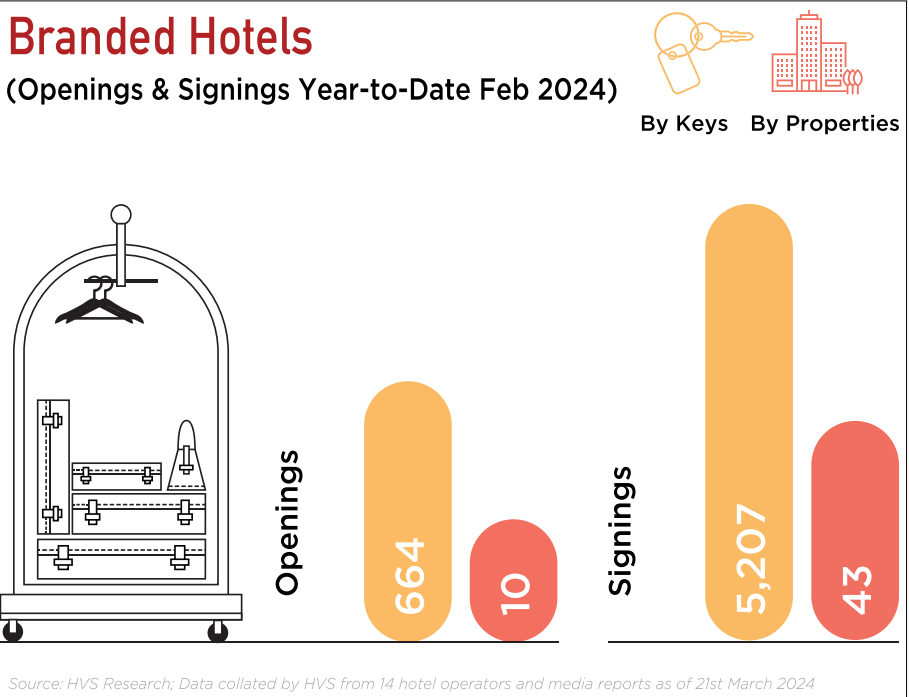
According to HVS Anarock’s ‘Hotels & Hospitality Overview’, February 2024 witnessed a year-on-year (YoY) spike in average room rates (ARRs) across the country, further underscoring the sector’s recovery momentum. Particularly noteworthy is the surge in rates observed in Delhi and Hyderabad, where prices surged by 17-18 per cent.

The optimism reverberating through the hospitality sector is mirrored in the financial markets as well. Key hotel stocks have witnessed substantial growth, with their prices soaring by an impressive 50-160 per cent YoY.

The resurgence in occupancy rates, coupled with the surge in average hotel rates and the bullish performance of hotel stocks, paints a promising picture for

Key hotel stocks have witnessed substantial growth, with their prices soaring by an impressive 50-160 per cent YoY

India’s hospitality sector. It signifies a gradual return to normalcy and underscores its ability to adapt and innovate even in the most challenging times. This resilience not only showcases the industry’s enduring strength and flexibility but also serves as a testament to its capacity for growth and evolution. □





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# SPURRING HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY GROWTH

 **Amita Pandey**

India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO) stands as a cornerstone in fostering the growth of India's trade sector. With a mission to serve as a catalyst for India's trade growth, ITPO offers a diverse array of services to hospitality industry. Its extensive infrastructure, coupled with robust marketing and information facilities, provides invaluable support to exporters and importers alike. By assisting buyers in sourcing products from India and facilitating opportunities for trade and investment, ITPO plays a crucial role in driving the nation's economic growth.

"ITPO takes its influence beyond national borders by organizing national level participation in major overseas trade fairs and hosting exclusive India sourcing fairs. Through these initiatives, ITPO not only promotes Indian products and services on a global platform but also contributes significantly to shaping India's trade policies. As the country continues

to assert itself as a significant player in the global market, ITPO remains committed to fostering economic cooperation among nations and facilitating seamless global trade," said **Hema Maity**, General Manager, Functional Division, Fair Services, Domestic Fairs, ITPO.


**One of the standout events in ITPO's trade calendar is the AAHAR exposition, recognised as one of Asia's premier B2B exhibitions**

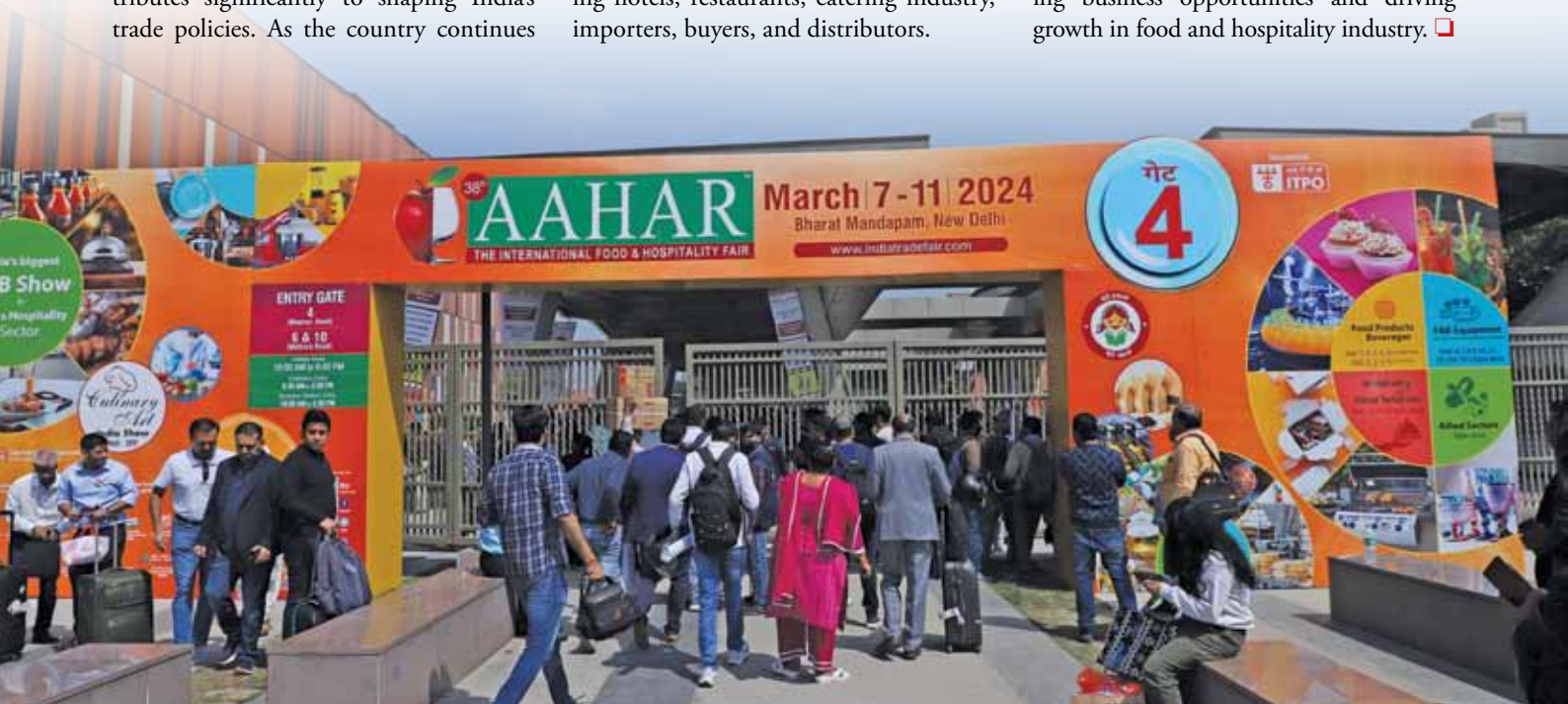
## AAHAR exposition

One of the standout events in ITPO's trade calendar is the AAHAR exposition, recognised as one of Asia's premier B2B exhibitions in the food and hospitality domain. This exposition serves as an order-writing trade show, attracting participants from various sectors including hotels, restaurants, catering industry, importers, buyers, and distributors.

ITPO plays crucial role in driving India's economic growth by offering comprehensive services to hospitality industry & through initiatives like AAHAR exposition.

Maity pointed out, "The AAHAR exposition showcases a wide range of products and services spanning food and beverages, food processing machinery and equipment, bakery heavy machinery equipment, food-grade packaging material, tentage and decor, hospitality and housekeeping products, gift items, mist coolers, fans, and refrigeration. With its comprehensive offerings, AAHAR serves as a one-stop destination for industry professionals to explore the latest trends, innovations, and solutions in the food and hospitality sector. AAHAR has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years and has become ultimate destination for global vendors and sourcing professionals"

Looking ahead, AAHAR 2025 is slated to take place from 4-8 March 2025, promising a showcase of hospitality industry excellence. With over 1,600 companies expected to participate, AAHAR 2025 is poised to set new benchmarks in promoting business opportunities and driving growth in food and hospitality industry. 





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# Infrastructure investment boosts tourism

**Amitabh Kant** highlights hotel industry as a critical driver of growth and job creation in India's future economic landscape.

 **Janice Alyosius**

Addressing participants at a recent event, **Amitabh Kant**, G20 Sherpa, India, articulated a vision that could potentially reshape India's economic landscape, prioritising tourism as the anchor for growth and job creation. Kant underscored a shift in policy focus that can transform the power of tourism beyond its traditional role as a leisure activity. "Tourism will be the most critical driver of growth in India's future, especially under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, where he will prioritise tourism for both, GDP growth and job creation," he said.

Kant highlighted tourism's multifaceted impact on the economy. "Tourism emerges not just as a sector but as a potent force for job creation, with the potential to generate 25 million jobs within the next 5 to 6 years," Kant







mentioned. He emphasised on the importance of last-mile connectivity to tourism destinations, recognising it as an anchor for enhancing visitor experiences and driving footfall. “The Government of India has already invested significantly in this area, evident in initiatives such as the construction of 80,000 kilometres of roads, expressways, and highways over the past decade, benefitting every state in India,” he said.

Underscoring the need for concerted efforts to bridge existing infrastructure gaps, he said that states must shoulder the responsibility of ensuring seamless connectivity to key tourist sites. “The primary responsibility of the state should be to ensure last-mile connectivity to tourism destinations. Since there are around 15 tourist destinations in a state, the provision of last-mile connectivity becomes paramount. Many states lack adequate last-mile road connectivity to the heritage sites or destinations, which, in my view, is of utmost importance,” he asserted.

Kant also underlined the role of cleanliness in shaping tourists’ percep-



**Amitabh Kant**  
G20 Sherpa  
India

**Many states lack adequate last-mile road connectivity to heritage sites or destinations, which, in my view, is of utmost importance**

tions and experiences. “I believe there is a need to further encourage states to prioritize cleanliness. The focus should shift towards the top 20 sites within each state, specifically examining the cleanliness index of these locations. Emphasis should be placed on assessing the cleanli-

ness of key destinations within each state. States should be ranked based solely on the cleanliness of these tourism destinations. In my opinion, significant importance should be placed on cleanliness, as it is crucial for tourism and falls under the state’s responsibility. States should be incentivized accordingly,” he said.

Kant advocated for recognising tourism as an industry. “Currently, only nine states in India recognise tourism as an industry. This means charging electricity rates at industrial rates rather than commercial rates. Therefore, states that treat tourism as an industry, offering benefits such as electricity at lower rates and land allocation at industrial rates, should be rated higher. However, despite the designation, only four or five states have begun providing these benefits. It is important to note that many states have yet to implement such measures. Hence, states that provide these benefits should be rewarded, while those lagging in recognising tourism as an industry should face penalties. By incentivising states to support tourism as an industry, we can promote its real benefits effectively,” he emphasised. □





# FOSTERING HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY'S PROSPECTS

States across India have been increasingly recognising importance of hospitality industry and its potential to drive economic growth.

## States support hospitality growth: HRAEI



**Sudesh Poddar**  
President  
HRAEI

State governments play an important role in the growth of the hospitality sector. Last year, the West Bengal cabinet approved a proposal to grant industry status to the hospitality sector in

the state, aiming to attract investments in tourism and generate employment. Odisha was among the first states in India to confer industry status on the tourism sector as part of its industrial policy in 2022. Additionally, the Assam state government has undertaken numerous initiatives and is preparing to launch a new tourism policy in the upcoming Assembly session to bolster tourism and hospitality in the state. These initiatives ensure various facilities for the hospitality sector in their respective states.

Granting industry status by states helps hotels save a significant amount on electricity bills, as they are charged power tariffs at industrial rates rather than the higher commercial rates. It also leads to savings on water supply bills. Moreover, the hospitality sector benefits from reduced licence fees and other taxes, including property tax. Additionally, this designation allows the industry to enjoy a better FAR (floor-area ratio).

These actions by state governments encourage investors to invest in the tourism sector within the state. Additionally,

they support the expansion of existing infrastructure. The infusion of fresh investment into the hospitality sector holds substantial potential for generating employment opportunities on a significant scale. This strategic move not only propels the growth of the hospitality industry but also serves as a catalyst for hotel chains to embark on the development of additional properties, thereby further bolstering the sector's expansion.

**Granting industry status by states helps hotels save a significant amount on electricity and water supply bills**

States such as Karnataka and Rajasthan granted industry status to the hospitality sector years ago. However, it has been observed that this status often fails to deliver on its promises. Therefore, it is time for states to match their words with actions and provide tangible support to the industry, rather than limiting themselves to mere lip service.



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# Hospitality sector thrives with states' backing: HRANI



**Garish Oberoi**  
President  
HRANI

In the dynamic landscape of hospitality sector, the role of state governments cannot be overstated. As we navigate the challenges and opportunities inherent in the sector, it becomes increasingly evident that the support and initiatives of states are paramount for fostering growth and development.

One of the most pressing needs facing the sector is the provision of capital subsidies and land for hotels and restaurants. By offering financial assistance to offset

fixed costs, state governments can provide much-needed relief to businesses, allowing them to invest in expansion and innovation, ultimately driving economic growth.

Furthermore, the grant of industry status to the hospitality sector holds immense significance. This recognition not only acknowledges its substantial contribution to the economy but also opens doors to a host of incentives and benefits. With industry status, the sector can attract greater investment, spur innovation, and create job opportunities, thereby fuelling overall economic prosperity.

Implementing public-private partnership (PPP) models presents another avenue through which state governments can catalyse growth in the hospitality industry. By leveraging the strengths of both the public and private sectors, governments can facilitate the development of world-class infrastructure and amenities, enhancing the tourism experience and attracting more visitors.

States should actively promote a seamless tourism experience by focusing on delivering innovative and collaborative experiences at destinations. This includes measures such as reducing interstate transport taxes, which can significantly alleviate the financial burden on travelers and operators. Such initiatives not only enhance their competitiveness but

also contribute to their sustainability in the market.

Investment in infrastructure development and strategic marketing campaigns is equally vital. Improving connectivity, enhancing tourist attractions, and promoting destinations through targeted initiatives are essential steps in attracting tourists and bolstering hospitality revenues.

**States should actively promote a seamless tourism experience by focusing on delivering innovative and collaborative experiences at destinations**

In conclusion, the trajectory of the hospitality sector in India is intricately tied to the support and interventions of state governments. By prioritising initiatives such as subsidies, land for projects, industry status grants, PPP models including ease of licencing and operations, governments can create an enabling environment for the sector to thrive. Together, through collaborative efforts between industry stakeholders and policymakers, we can realise a vision of a vibrant and resilient hospitality sector that contributes significantly to the country's economic growth and cultural enrichment.





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## States aid tourism's conducive growth: HRAWI



**Pradeep Shetty**  
President  
HRAWI

The hospitality sector plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth and promoting employment opportunities across the nation. However, the realisation of its full potential hinges significantly on the support and collaboration extended by state governments.

The sector is not merely about providing accommodation and dining experiences; it is a multifaceted ecosystem that contributes substantially to India's GDP and employment landscape. From luxury

hotels to quaint homestays, the sector caters to a diverse segment of travellers, offering a glimpse into the rich tapestry of India's cultural heritage and hospitality. State governments, therefore, play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment conducive to the growth and prosperity of the hospitality sector. This entails a multifaceted approach encompassing policy reforms, infrastructure development and promotional initiatives.

**State governments must enact policies that streamline regulatory processes and facilitate ease of doing business for hospitality establishments**

First and foremost, state governments must enact policies that streamline regulatory processes and facilitate ease of doing business for hospitality establishments. Delays in obtaining licences, cumbersome bureaucratic procedures and ambiguous regulations only serve as impediments to growth and innovation within the sector. By implementing transparent and business-friendly policies, states can incentivise investment and nurture entrepreneurship, thereby catalysing the expansion of the hospitality industry. Moreover, infrastructure development is paramount in enhanc-

ing the tourism potential of a region. State governments should prioritise the development of tourist circuits, heritage sites and transportation networks to enhance accessibility and visitor experience. Robust infrastructure not only attracts tourists but also creates employment opportunities.

In addition to policy and infrastructure support, state governments must actively engage in promotional activities to showcase their respective regions as tourist destinations. Collaborative efforts between the government and industry stakeholders such as tourism campaigns, cultural festivals and destination marketing initiatives are instrumental in attracting domestic and international tourists, thereby driving demand for hospitality services. Furthermore, state governments can leverage technology and innovation to enhance the competitiveness of the sector. Initiatives such as digital tourism platforms, online booking systems and hospitality training programmes can empower industry professionals and elevate service standards.

The growth and sustainability of the industry are contingent upon the support and proactive engagement of state governments. By enacting conducive policies, investing in infrastructure, promoting tourism and embracing innovation, states can unlock the full potential of the hospitality industry, driving economic growth and prosperity across the nation.







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# Hotel industry can leverage states' help to good effect: SIHRA



**K Syama Raju**  
President  
SIHRA

State governments play a crucial role in fostering the growth of the hospitality sector. They should leverage proactive

policies, incentives, and infrastructure development, recognising the hospitality industry as a significant contributor to the economy, job creation, and cultural exchange.

Granting industry status to the hospitality sector is crucial, ensuring that hoteliers benefit from equitable rates in property tax and electricity charges, similar to other industries.

State government support can take various forms, including favourable taxation policies, streamlined licensing procedures, investment in tourism infrastructure, and promotion of hospitality education and training. Such measures not only attract domestic and international investment but also enhance the overall competitiveness and quality of services in the hospitality sector.

Moreover, the symbiotic relationship between tourism and hospitality can significantly boost tourism inflows, thereby

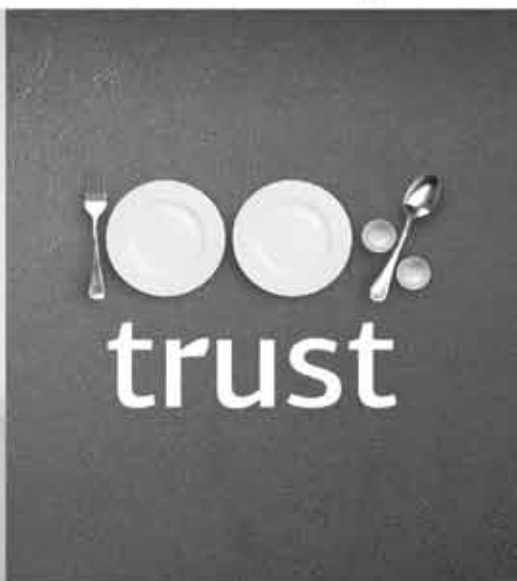
generating revenue and employment opportunities. Therefore, it is imperative for state governments to collaborate closely with industry stakeholders, understand their challenges, and devise tailored strategies to stimulate growth, innovation, and sustainability in the hospitality sector.

**It is imperative for state governments to collaborate closely with industry stakeholders, understand their challenges & devise tailored strategies**

SIHRA firmly believes that robust state government support is indispensable for unlocking the full potential of the hospitality sector, driving economic growth, and positioning India as a preferred destination for travellers worldwide. □







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# New Assistant Secretary General joins FHRAI

**Payal Swami**, with over 16 years of experience & background in policy advocacy, has been appointed as new Assistant Secretary General of FHRAI.

**P**ayal Swami has been appointed as new Assistant Secretary General of FHRAI. Prior to joining FHRAI, she was associated with ASSOCHAM for more than seven years in the position of Joint Director. She was engaged in policy advocacy to represent the interests of the trade association and work towards creating a conducive business environment. Her role involved advocating for policy reforms, regulatory changes, and initiatives aimed at promoting industry growth, competitiveness, and sustainability.

Overall, she has more than 16 years of experience with various companies. She has held various positions with companies such as K K Modi Group, J B Exports House and Asia Pacific Corp, among others. In her current role, she will be overseeing the day-to-day operations of FHRAI



**Payal Swami**  
Assistant Secretary General  
FHRAI

and providing support to the Secretary General, **Jaison Chacko**.

Swami is a highly motivated, dedicated, experienced and qualified professional, committed to helping businesses

“**Payal Swami will be overseeing day-to-day operations of FHRAI & providing support to Secretary General, Jaison Chacko**

succeed. She is a strong leader, strategic thinker, and an excellent communicator and relationship builder. She is a double postgraduate with master's in business management from Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies, Pune, Bachelor of Legislative Law from Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut and Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Delhi University. Swami is also a member of Bar Council of India and Delhi High Court. She is proficient in various languages, including English, Hindi and French. □

## Precision in every box

Bell Match stands out as a trailblazer in matchbox manufacturing industry, offering wide range of customisation options under one roof.



**B**ell Match is a pioneer in manufacturing a wide array of match boxes, offering comprehensive customisation options under one roof. Its dedication to meeting customer requirements spans from box printing to splint length and head colour, ensuring that each product is tailored to perfection.

“We take pride in our long-standing partnerships with top hotel and resort chains, bars, and pubs, both in India and overseas. For decades, these establishments have trusted us for their brand promotion needs through custom match boxes. Our ability to handle short print runs and cater to specific customisation requests has earned us their loyalty,” said **Vasant Rajasingh**, CEO, The Bell Match Company.



**Vasant Rajasingh**  
CEO  
The Bell Match Company

### Focus on growth & efficiency

One of company's key strength lies in delivering consistent products for hotel chains worldwide, ensuring that their branding remains uniform across all properties. In line with its growth strategy, the company

is focusing on vertically integrating its production unit to streamline processes and enhance efficiency. To support this endeavour, it has planned additional capital investment of ₹10 crore for the current financial year. These investments will further bolster its capabilities and strengthen its position as a leader in the industry. The company believes in sustainable growth and prudent financial management. Despite its expansion efforts, it has managed to keep debt levels minimal. □





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# Hospitality's tech odyssey Embracing AI & robotics



Integration of robotics & AI into hospitality industry presents opportunity for hotels to enhance operational efficiency & improve guest experiences.



Ananya Kukreja

It is undeniable that robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) are progressively moving towards disrupting industries, including one as inherently human-centric as hospitality and travel. “While the personalization and warmth provided by a human employee can never be substituted for a guest, there is ample opportunity for automation in areas where tasks are replicable and scalable,” said **Mohankumar PK**, Founder & CEO, Turnstone Hospitality LLP. The idea is to assign monotonous tasks to products and services that do not directly or indirectly negatively impact guest satisfaction. “By embracing robotics and AI, hotels can stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market landscape,” stated **Dinesh Rai**, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi. While hospitality establishments would always





prefer for a human server to recommend guests' specials and pairings, they would be happy to see a humanoid robot clearing cutlery and crockery and even serving the food. This approach allows servers to concentrate on their designated sections, promptly fulfill guest requirements, share their expertise and knowledge, and delegate tasks such as making frequent trips to the UT and kitchen. Some ways robots can be put to their best utilisation:

- Delivering items to rooms—linen, laundry, food, drinks and toiletries, among others.
- Serving and clearing food in restaurants.
- Assisting HK—delivering linen and toiletries to room attendant on their floors eliminating time wasted in round trips from the store.
- Large public area cleaning with automated vacuums, among others.
- Enhancing security through identifying suspicious situations and items and patrolling areas with low CCTV visibility.



**Girish Prabhu**  
CEO  
Instio Experiences

**“While robots offer significant benefits, they should complement rather than overshadow the human touch that defines hospitality”**

- Safety and hygiene—robots can perform tasks without human intervention, reducing the risk of contamination. AI-powered systems can also monitor hygiene protocols and ensure compliance.

- Marketing and publicity—employing cutting-edge technology can generate buzz and attract media attention, leading to free publicity for the hotel or restaurant. This can help enhance brand image and attract tech enthusiasts as well as curious customers.

### Integration of robotics & AI

By integrating robots into their operations, hotels can save time and money while enhancing the guest experience. However, it is crucial to remember that robots should not replace the human element entirely. The warmth and personal connection provided by human staff remain essential in creating a memorable hospitality experience. “While robots offer significant benefits, they should complement rather than overshadow the human touch that defines hospitality,” observed **Girish Prabhu**, CEO, Instio Experiences.

Implementing advanced technologies can significantly uphold both the top and bottom line of a hotel. These innovations enhance operational efficiency, leading to cost savings by optimising resource allocation and reducing waste. Moreover, by allowing human staff to personalise





**Rishi S Puri**  
Senior VP, Operations  
MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts

**It is paramount to strike a delicate balance between technological innovation and personalised service**

experiences and streamlined services, hotels can attract more guests, increase guest satisfaction, and ultimately boost revenue. Additionally, by demonstrating a commitment to sustainability, hotels can appeal to eco-conscious consumers, further expanding their customer base and drives profitability and competitiveness in the hospitality industry. While the initial investment in disruptive technology can be significant, in the long run, it can lead to cost savings. Robots can work around the clock without breaks or the need for wages, reducing labour costs. Additionally, AI systems can optimise resource utilisation, leading to sav-



ings in energy and supplies. “It is paramount to strike a delicate balance between technological innovation and personalised service,” averred **Rishi S Puri**, Senior VP, Operations MAYFAIR Hotels & Resorts.

**Feedback & strategies**

Many hotels and restaurants have reported positive feedback from their experientia-

tion with AI robotics in employment. Automated kitchen, UT, and F&B services have proven to enhance efficiency and reduce discrepancies. This trend and impending necessity continue to catch the industry by surprise, increasingly becoming a part of any organization’s short and medium-term strategies. “Technology will be adopted more quickly at the mid-level, where personalisation is not as highly







**Dinesh Rai**  
General Manager  
Crowne Plaza Kochi

## By embracing robotics and AI, hotels can stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market landscape

opportunities for upgradation in the housekeeping department and sustainability initiatives. “The potential of humanoid robots extends beyond traditional hotel services,” shared **Jayakrishnan T**, Founder & CEO, Asimov Robotics. Imagine a scenario where the hotel itself is a place of historical or cultural significance. In such cases, humanoid robots can serve as ambassadors, immersing guests in the destination’s heritage and promoting tourism.

Just like human concierge staff, robots can offer insights into local attractions, historical landmarks, and cultural events, enriching guests’ understanding and appreciation of the area.

Another field of AI disruption is data analysis and insights, which is very rapidly gaining popularity and continually attaining advancements. AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can be programmed to gain valuable insights into customer behaviour preferences and trends. The data can be used to optimise menu offerings, pricing strategy, marketing campaigns and business outcomes.

In essence, humanoid robots represent a dynamic opportunity for hotels to innovate and differentiate themselves in a competitive market. By leveraging these technological advancements, hotels can enhance customer experiences, increase operational efficiency, invest in high level management, training and growth, and ultimately drive long-term profitability. □

valued as differentiation,” explained **Vishal Singh**, General Manager, Taj Exotica Resort, Goa.

Indian guests are renowned for their belief in ‘Atithi Devo Bhava’, treating guests as gods. When travelling abroad, they may adapt to different norms, but within the country, they cherish the personal touch. So, why the shift towards technology? “By

embracing disruptive technology while preserving authentic guest interactions, hotels can forge a path towards sustained success in the competitive hospitality landscape,” pointed out Puri.

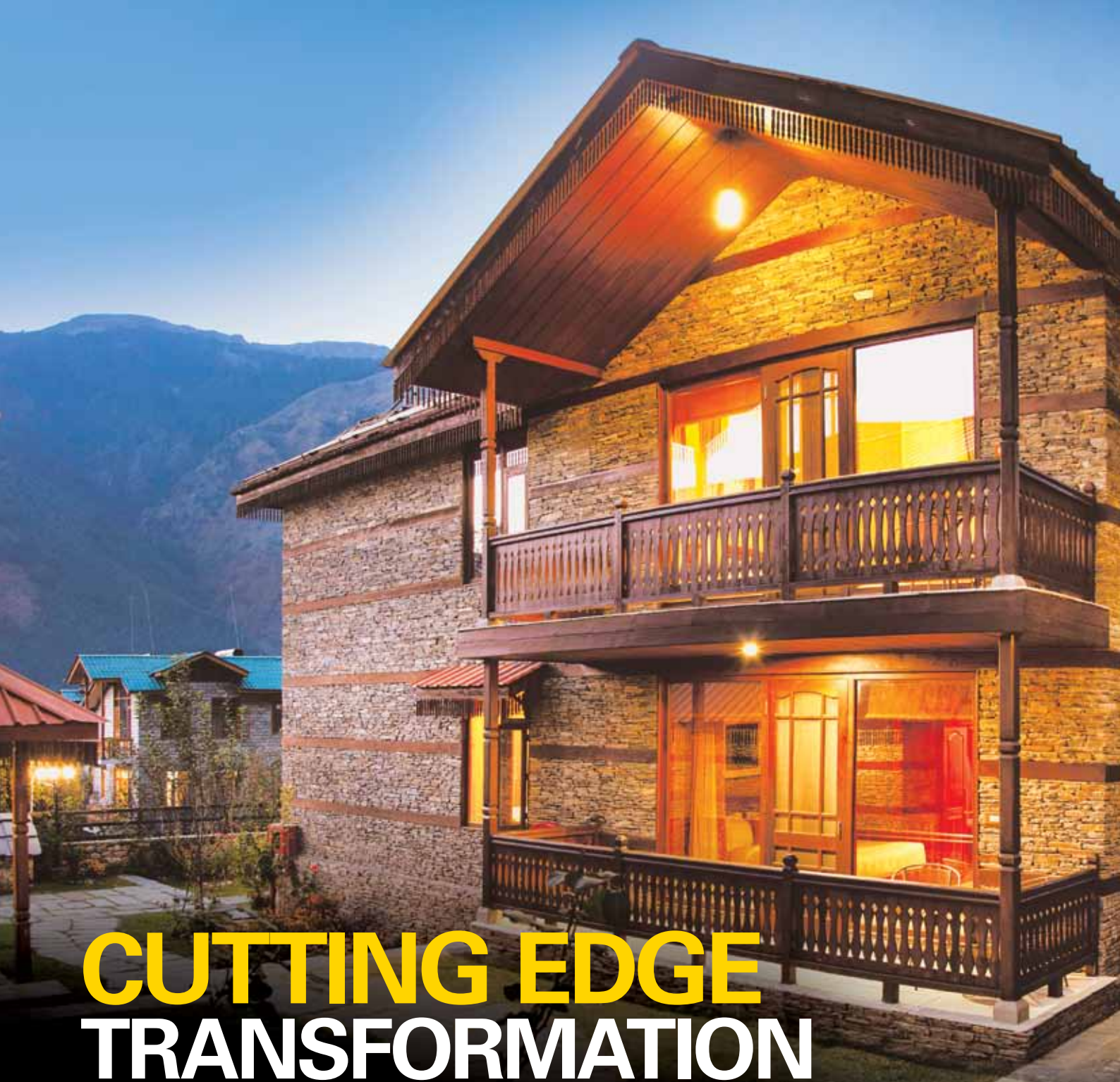
Technology and AI is here to stay and will only expand further with every walk of human life. It is therefore important to understand its usage, nuances and side effects, among others, before taking a collective call toward implementation. “Taking the simple step of testing the product first, addressing pain points, and involving the teams will boost everyone’s confidence and set the organization on a path to achieving excellence in service, standards, and satisfactory delivery quality,” said **Kush Kapoor**, CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts.

### Future directions

“There are several trends and possibilities that the future holds in AI robotics for the future in restaurant industry,” confirmed **Harshit Surana**, Founder, The Yellow House Robot Restaurant. Integration of such hardware and software can reduce the chance of human error—some great







# CUTTING EDGE TRANSFORMATION

Boutique hotels are leveraging technology to enhance guest experience, transitioning to streamlined processes such as cloud-based systems and personalised services.

 **Sakshi Singh**

**N**ot too long ago, hotels required notification of special dietary requirements or other specific arrangements every time a booking was made. Even if you were a frequent guest, hotels rarely had access to data regarding special requirements. However, things have drastically changed. Most proprietary hotel booking platforms now automatically suggest any specific requests you have made on previous occasions. Technology has significantly transformed the entire process from booking to check-in, enhancing the overall

guest experience. It is not that hotels did not store the data; rather, the technology to process the available data was not robust enough.

Large hotel chains were the pioneers in adopting technology, and it made sense, as high-end hospitality solutions were relatively expensive and required scale to be economically viable. However, there exists a segment of hotels that are not short of funds and boast higher average room revenue (ARR) than even luxury hotels, yet their level of technology adoption falls short of that seen in larger chains:





**Ritesh Sood**

Owner  
ShivAdya, Manali

**With deeper integration of technology, we aim to further reduce our carbon footprint and achieve net-zero emissions**

guest experience. The growth in the number of luxury boutique hotels after COVID has also forced solution providers to take notice of the segment and develop personalised technologies. Some of the technology solutions witnessing rapid deployment are inventory management, staff management, booking management, guest communication, cloud-based property management systems, channel manager and contactless guest services. Technology providers are witnessing strong demand for new-age solutions from boutique hotel owners. “A significant portion of our queries—roughly 25 to 30 per cent—come from boutique hotels, and this is expected to increase. It underscores how boutique hotels are turning to cloud solutions to enhance operational capabilities and better serve guests,” said **Sivaprasad Gangadharan**, Chief Sales Officer, Hotelogix. Similarly, around 40 per cent of the clients of Hotel-Spider are boutique hotels.

Two major factors that have complicated the situation for boutique hotels were pricing and inventory. Before the widespread adoption of cloud services, technology providers had to maintain dedicated servers for data, significantly increasing the cost of front-end software. To justify the substantial cost of technology, hotel owners needed to have a large inventory of rooms.

The increasing interest of guests in personalised experiences is driving up the demand for boutique hotels, prompting existing owners to invest in new proper-

ties, thereby giving rise to multi-property chains. On the other hand, the emergence of cloud services has drastically reduced costs for technology partners, enabling them to offer lower prices to hotel owners.

Moreover, most boutique hotels prioritise sustainability, and technology solutions help them operate more efficiently. “Eco-friendly and sustainable methods are given top priority by many boutique hotels as part of their brand identity. To reduce their impact on the environment, they might employ technological solutions such as waste reduction programmes, water-saving fixtures, and energy-efficient lighting,” said **Shveta Bamnyal**, COO, Hotel-Spider.

Paperless operations, artificial intelligence-powered pollution meters, and smart heaters are among the most sought-after technologies being utilised by sustainability-focused hotels.



**Sivaprasad Gangadharan**

Chief Sales Officer  
Hotelogix

**A significant portion of our queries—roughly 25 to 30%—come from boutique hotels & this is expected to increase**

“Our use of a pollution meter goes beyond traditional environmental concerns, even measuring the impact of building materials on indoor air quality,” stated **Depi Chaudhry**, Owner, Aashraya on the Ganga, Rishikesh.

Boutique hotels are also leveraging technology to empower staff and enable them to take ownership of various roles. With inventory management and staff management software such as Sortly and Anylist, managers find it easier to run operations smoothly.

boutique hotels. Typically, luxury boutique hotels are characterised by unique features such as historical significance, theme-based designs, or secluded locations, and typically have around 40-50 rooms. Some boutique hotels are even smaller, but their ARR is generally higher than that of luxury hotels in the area. The limited capacity of these hotels contributes to their exclusivity, which is what makes them desirable in the first place, but it also complicates the implementation of technology.

Not to be left behind, boutique hotels are however adapting tech solutions to improve operational efficiency and enhance

“It is a crucial tool for maximising resource utilisation, eliminating waste, and ultimately creating a more productive environment,” added Chaudhry.

Many boutique hotel owners believe that utilising technology to enhance sustainability should yield tangible results, such as reducing waste generation and emissions. “With deeper integration of technology, we aim to further reduce our carbon footprint and achieve net-zero emissions,” stated **Ritesh Sood**, Owner, ShivAdya, Manali.

Each room at ShivAdya is equipped with a solar water geyser and heat pump, leading to significant energy savings. In addition to enhancing backend operations, the widespread use of technology has had the most significant impact on the guest experience.

Boutique hotels set themselves apart in the crowded Indian hospitality sector by offering personalised experiences, intimate settings, and world-class services. Technology has aided owners in delivering tailored experiences to each visitor based on their preferences. “They can track guests’ preferences and offer customised recommendations by leveraging



**Shveta Bamnyal**  
COO  
Hotel-Spider

**Eco-friendly and sustainable methods are given top priority by many boutique hotels as part of their brand identity**

booking engines and guest data analytics,” explained Bamnyal.

Software tools such as booking engines help hotels promote lodging features and package deals that include dining and entertainment options. Integrated technology solutions are revolutionising every aspect of hotel operations. When the

entire technology stack is integrated into a centralised database, it becomes easier to streamline a guest’s experience from the moment they click on a targeted promotional campaign to the moment they say goodbye to the property.

The entire sequence of events from promotion to lead conversion to booking, check-in, and finally checkout can be meticulously planned and executed. Technology is assisting managers in making informed decisions, such as attracting the right guests and personalising their experiences to their liking. It also aids in identifying challenges through robust feedback systems and rectifying them.

“We also facilitate an all-in-one tech stack for hotels by providing a channel manager and booking engine. Additionally, we assist with targeted marketing and feedback management systems to collect, manage, and promote positive guest feedback,” explained Gangadharan.

Boutique hotel owners have realised that technology solutions can enable them to operate as efficiently as large chains and compete with them in terms of service quality and guest experience. □





# LEISURE SUITES BLEND HISTORY & MODERNITY

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts introduces The Earth Amritsar, its first Trademark Collection hotel in India.



DDP Bureau

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of The Earth Amritsar, Trademark Collection by Wyndham, its first for the brand in India. The 57-room heritage hotel operates in collaboration with Earth Suites & Resorts.

“Trademark Collection by Wyndham is one of the fastest growing brands in Wyndham’s portfolio and just as no two travellers are alike, Trademark Collection hotels are equally distinctive and defined by a spirit of independence and individuality,” said **Dimitris Manikis**, President, EMEA, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts.

He further added, “We recognize significant potential for the brand in India, as it appeals to midscale and upscale hoteliers who desire independence while capitalizing on the competitive advantages that partnering with a company like Wyndham provides. The Earth Amritsar is an excellent representation of the Trademark Collection brand and will provide guests with an upscale experience in beautiful Amritsar. We look forward to furthering the brand’s presence in India.”



**Dimitris Manikis**  
President, EMEA  
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

**We recognise significant potential for the brand in India, as it appeals to midscale & upscale hoteliers**

Located in the heart of Amritsar, the five-acre upscale The Earth Amritsar offer a selection of rooms in two unique buildings. Accommodations are spread across the hotel’s 130-year-old heritage building, once home to the Victoria Jubilee Hospital, built to commemorate the 55th year of Queen Victoria’s reign, and even more accommodations will be avail-

able in a new build addition, currently under construction.

“The Earth Amritsar, Trademark Collection by Wyndham reflects our fruitful collaboration with Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, and we are looking forward to being the first to bring one of the company’s most popular brands to this spiritual city. With the support of Wyndham’s size, scale, and distribution we will deliver an elevated guest experience in a beautiful heritage setting unlike any other,” said **Vivek Shah**, Director, Earth Suites & Resorts.

The Earth Amritsar, Trademark Collection by Wyndham boasts 57 contemporary suites designed to seamlessly blend with the property’s natural surroundings and historical elements. High-end amenities include a fitness centre, outdoor pool as well as two restaurants delivering guests elevated culinary experiences. One restaurant offers an open-air setting and the other provides an all-day dining option. The hotel also boasts a whiskey lounge, as well as a banquet hall, meeting space and luxury transfers to and from Sri Guru Ram Das Jee International Airport, Amritsar. □



# ETHICAL PRINCIPLES drive sustainable practices

Sustainability in various aspects of hotel operations is crucial, including its impact on people, the planet and profits.

I keep asking myself, is sustainability just a good thing or is it something super-critical? Isn't it a moral imperative, rather than seeing it as a strict law in the traditional legal sense? Doesn't it embody ethical principles aimed at preserving resources, protecting the environment, and ensuring the well-being of present and future generations? While sustainability today is enshrined in difficult-to-understand laws, the foundation lies in moral and ethical values related to stewardship, responsibility, and equity.

Frankly, hotels operate in strong resource-dense environments, and their operations are typically designed on a consumption-based model. The world is moving fast towards the regenerative model, where every part of the operation helps the company to regenerate its resources.

There are 1.4 billion Indians, and the country faces significant resource constraints. Forget about regeneration; currently, we are far from sustaining resources for future generations. Every day, we lose







**Siddharth Chakravarty**  
 Director, Sustainability,  
 Six Senses Fort Barwara

almost 11 football fields worth of good quality soil from earth. Whether it is clean air, clean water or nutrition, all these aspects are under severe stress. Let me address this through the common framework of sustainability—People, Planet and Profits.

**People**

**Community partnerships:** The sustainability fund at Six Senses is 0.5 per cent of the total revenues of the hotel. This fund is used to invest in the development of local communities, by providing clean drinking water to local schools, participating with the government for rewilding, and partnering with NGOs to work with



**We host DIY activities such as creating seed bank, learning to make effective microbial solutions for cleaning & crafting mosquito repellent**

the community. The hotel has plans to bring a state-of-the-art RO system to two local schools and a government hospital by April 2024.

**Employing more local talent:** By identifying the local talent and providing employment opportunities, we can bring down attrition. People who remain close to their families tend to seek employment elsewhere less frequently, resulting in higher job satisfaction and greater team stability.

**Training hosts and guests on climate change:** With the climate warrior programme, we educate our guests about climate change and its effect. At the Earth Lab, we host DIY activities such as creating a seed bank, learning to make effective microbial solutions for cleaning and crafting mosquito repellent.

**Planet**

**Saving carbon footprint:** To save earth, we need to shift quickly to renewable energy sources and, at the same time reduce carbon emissions. The need of the hour is to not limit ourselves to solar energy but also move towards de-carbonising. At Six Senses, we make deliberate choices regarding our supply chain to control carbon emissions. We grow a small part of our vegetables and fruits in-house and put a lot of effort into sourcing most of the ingredients locally. In 2023, we were able to grow 386 kg of local vegetables. Hotels can invest in technologies such as Aeroponic and Hydroponic to grow a lot of their daily vegetables needed in-house. These methods are not labour-intensive.

**Reduction in fossil fuel bills:** The shift from boilers to heat pumps is more efficient and saves fossil fuel by using it at optimum conditions to drive power efficiency. It also helps in building a management



system for ease of use. By introducing electric or hybrid vehicles, we can further reduce fossil fuel usage and provide guests a premium experience.

**Amalgamation of natural ventilation:**

At Six Senses Fort Barwara, we keep the windows in the back office open for ventilation and to allow natural air to flow in. We also switch off the HVAC systems when they are not needed to save on electricity consumption.

**In-house biogas generator:**

The new system designed for biogas in the hotel is more efficient, and the money invested can be recovered in the short span of five years. The biogas generator is versatile as we can reuse food waste and provide Methane as a by-product, which can be used by boilers to heat water, generate steam and can also be used in kitchen stoves.

**Bringing back native plantation:**

We are reintroducing native species to improve soil fertility and conserve water and electricity. Additionally, having more native species reduces the need for insecticide spraying, thus promoting the development of a rich biodiversity.

**Stop fumigation:**

It is crucial to halt fumigation. Mosquitoes breed in stagnant waters, and fumigation hinders biodiversity, resulting in the loss of bees and other insects. Many brands have made significant strides by adopting innovative solutions, such as implementing mechanical

traps and introducing fish to water bodies to target the root cause of mosquito larvae. Additionally, herbal mosquito repellents are used as a substitute for fumigation. At Earth Lab, we have developed our own mosquito repellent and educate guests on how to make it themselves.

**The need of the hour is to not limit ourselves to solar energy but also move towards de-carbonising**

**Introduction of drip irrigation:**

Hotels typically feature extensive landscaping. One of the best practices is to utilise drip irrigation systems, which can be customised to meet specific gardening needs. With advancements in technology, we can implement automated systems equipped with soil sensors. These sensors provide insights into climate trends throughout the year. Alternatively, I highly recommend handheld soil moisture sensors.

**Profit**

**Brand differentiation:** Investing in sustainable initiatives, both locally and on a larger scale, enables us to establish a unique identity and distinguish our brand from other resorts. Customers who care about the environment are drawn to us and become more loyal to our company.

**Reduces staff attrition:** By fostering a culture of sustainability as a practice,

the hotel can decrease staff attrition, as it has been proven that people are drawn to firms with worthy causes. Hotels invest significant resources in training new staff, and higher attrition rates increase the likelihood of operational disruptions. Therefore, we must allocate more training hours to enhance productivity in operations.

**Introduction of meters to measure water and electricity usage:**

To reduce water wastage, we enforce strict measurement to analyse data that highlights excessive usage. By monitoring areas where we can conserve resources and taking necessary steps, we save money in the long term.

**Food waste should be strictly measured using metrics plate waste and kitchen trash:**

This helps in the kitchen's effective resource allocation, and after the waste is separated into cooked and green waste, analytics may be performed to identify deeper reasons.

**Sustainable supply chain process:**

A dedicated discussion should focus on establishing a conscious supply chain, transitioning to local procurement, and selecting greener options. This shift can result in higher profits while placing greater emphasis on local suppliers to help reduce variable procurement costs.

*(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same) □*







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# INCLUSIVITY CHECKS-IN TO HOTEL SECTOR



Could inclusivity be the answer to labour shortage in hotel industry? Hotels are rethinking traditional hiring practices to prioritize talent, skill & potential.

 **Lipla Negi**

As a rising number of holiday destinations around the globe are turning queer-friendly and Pride Month Marches colour the streets from London to New York, the hotel industry across the world is latching onto the idea of an inclusive workplace. Prioritizing a gender fluid work environment, hotels in the country are also committing to a genderless approach towards the hiring process. A sign of progressive thinking, this approach to ensure inclusivity not just ensures diversity and equality but also establishes 'talent' as a genderless entity.

## Gender-fluid job roles

Proud and loud, hotels nowadays are approaching job applications from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) candidates with the same level of consideration and professionalism as any other application. "While candidates typically do not explicitly declare their LGBTQ status in their applications, our commitment to inclusivity ensures that all candidates, regardless of their background, are evaluated based on their skills, qualifications, and potential contributions to our organization," averred **Deepak Badola**, Director, Talent & Culture, Fairmont Jaipur.





**Deepak Badola**  
Director, Talent & Culture  
Fairmont Jaipur

**All candidates are evaluated based on their skills, qualifications, and potential contributions to our organization**

homegrown hotel group takes pride in its 'PureLove Resource' Groups, which focus on gender diversity and inclusivity. These groups provide a safe space for open discussions and the sharing of experiences.

Global hotel brands such as Accor have made diversity and inclusion an integral part of their Code of Conduct (CoC). As part of their comprehensive approach, the company conducts a dedicated week-long programme globally, reaffirming its commitment to creating a workplace where every individual is valued. "At Fairmont Jaipur, we prioritize team awareness through targeted training sessions. This proactive measure ensures that our staff is not only aware but also well-prepared

to contribute positively to this evolving workplace paradigm," Badola elaborated.

### Pronoun proud

A bold and clear reflection of one's identity, pronouns are a subject of great pride for the LGBTQ+ community, and hotels also take it as a fair point. "Respect for individuals' pronouns is fundamental to our commitment to diversity and inclusion. We encourage team members to express their authentic selves, including using the pronouns aligned with their gender identity. As a practice, we ensure that all our documentation processes have an option to choose preferred pronouns and names," shared Tyagi.



**Akshay Tyagi**  
Head, Diversity  
Equity & Inclusion, The  
Lalit Suri Hospitality Group

**Within The LaLiT, LGBTQIA+ individuals lead teams, engage with clients, and manage diverse portfolios across different units**

For some hotels the breaking of gender dichotomy begins with the job description itself that straightaway puts skills before the gender. "Our job descriptions are crafted using inclusive language, emphasizing our unwavering commitment to diversity. In addition to participating in job fairs, we collaborate with community-led organizations to host events, fostering an environment where diverse candidates can thrive. We not only attend these events but actively partner with them to create opportunities for employment within our organization," explained **Akshay Tyagi**, Head, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group. The



While some hotels have officially opened to the idea of preferred pronouns, many are in process to implement it. “Supporting the use of preferred pronouns contributes to a culture of inclusivity and respect, and it is considered an essential aspect of creating a welcoming workplace for everyone. We are in a process to implement policies and provide training to create a supportive and respectful environment for all employees, including those who identify as LGBTQ+. The hotel is dedicated to creating a workplace that celebrates diversity and empowers individuals to bring their whole selves to work,” reckoned **Davinder Juj**, General Manager, Eros Hotel, New Delhi.

For hotels, the commitment and support are not just limited to choice of pronouns. The industry aims to break the glass ceiling by ensuring representation of the community in leadership roles. “Within The LaLiT, LGBTQIA+ individuals hold leadership positions in key areas such as marketing, DEI, sales, and various other functions across different units. They lead teams, engage with clients, and manage diverse portfolios within the organization. Our commitment is rooted in the belief that career progression should be based on skills, competence, and dedication, regardless of an individual’s gender identity or sexual orientation,” explained Tyagi.



**Davinder Juj**  
General Manager  
Eros Hotel, New Delhi

### Supporting the use of preferred pronouns contributes to a culture of inclusivity and respect

#### Safe & secure workplace

To rule out discrimination at the workplace, hotels are also coming up with robust policies to address any inappropriate or difficult situation and safeguard the rights of LGBTQ+ employees. While talking zero tolerance policy at The LaLiT, Tyagi informed, “We have adopted a gender-neutral POSH policy and established clear and accessible reporting mechanisms for incidents of discrimination, harassment, or inappropriate behavior,

with community members actively participating in committees addressing such matters. We also provide access to resource groups and rights that safeguard individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Our commitment to creating a secure and inclusive environment ensures that everyone within our community feels protected and valued.”

With a growing number of gay employees as well as travellers, the hotels are conducting regular training sessions for employees, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute towards an inclusive and respectful environment. Talking about Accor’s progressive initiatives in this direction, Badola said, “In collaboration with Silver Oak, Accor’s Wellness Partner, we further enhance our preparedness by organizing tailored sessions that empower our team to promptly handle situations involving LGBTQ guests or employees.” These measures collectively underscore industry’s effort in fostering a workplace culture that prioritizes safety, inclusivity, and the well-being of all individuals irrespective of their gender. This flexibility in hiring at hotels could do wonders in attracting the right kind of talent for the industry and making the destination diverse in true sense. ▣





# NEW WELLNESS ESCAPE IN DARJEELING HILLS

Atmosphere Core have announced partnership to develop luxury resort, Avongrove Tea Gardens, blending heritage charm with modern amenities.



**A**tmosphere Core has partnered with JPR Bhumi Developers to develop a luxury resort in Sukiapokhri, located in the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal. The resort, Avongrove Tea Gardens, is set to open in Q3, 2026, aligning with Atmosphere Core's goal of reaching 25 properties by 2025 in India.

The resort will feature 70 indulgent suites and villas, an all-day diner with alfresco style service, a specialty restaurant, and a classic library bar. At an altitude of over 5,000 feet, the resort will provide a perfect setting for wellness and spa activities. Atmosphere Core will also introduce a nature-inspired tranquil spa and wellness centre through its spa brand 'Elena'.

**Souvagya Mohapatra**, Managing Director, Atmosphere Core, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, & Bhutan, shared his enthusiasm, saying, "Renowned as the Queen of the Hills, the emerald slopes of the Darjeeling Hills have captivated trav-



**Souvagya Mohapatra**  
MD, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka  
& Bhutan, Atmosphere Core

ellers with their timeless beauty. I am delighted to announce our second project in North Bengal in the region's promising Darjeeling district, Avongrove Tea Gardens by Atmosphere, which is set to become a highly coveted destination."

This destination resort is perfect for leisure travellers seeking a peaceful retreat, as well as for hosting meetings, private celebrations, and weddings, with a 3,000 sq. ft indoor event space and a selection

of outdoor venues. Established in 1889, the Avongrove Tea Estate sprawls over 782 acres of lush greenery amidst the Himalayan slopes. Located a mere 15 kilometres from Mirik Lake and just a one-and-a-half-hour drive from Bagdogra International Airport, the estate offers a strategic and picturesque setting.

**The architecturally sympathetic villas will be thoughtfully integrated into the Himalayan slopes, valleys, and forests, providing guests a sense of seclusion**

The resort will be developed on 6-acres within the Avongrove Tea Estate, offering a panoramic 360-degree view of the tea garden. The architecturally sympathetic villas will be thoughtfully integrated into the Himalayan slopes, valleys, and forests, providing guests a sense of seclusion along with mesmerising views of the surrounding nature. □

# STREAMLINING



# FEEDBACK

In today's information age, where guest experiences heavily influence booking decisions, hotels must collect, analyse & act on feedback to remain competitive.

In the current digital age, guests' voices are more powerful than ever before. With the rise of online hotel reservation platforms and social media, a single review can influence a hotel's reputation and, by extension, its success. Understanding the pivotal role of guest feedback is about more than just managing online ratings. It is about tapping into insights that can drive improvement and guest experience and, ultimately, boost the bottom line.

### **Importance of guest feedback**

At its core, guest feedback is a direct line of communication between the hotel and its customers. It offers a raw, unfiltered view of the guest experience, highlighting what hotels are doing right and where they need improvement. In the age of informa-

tion, where choices are many and comparisons are easy, prospective guests heavily rely on the experiences of others to make their decisions. Consequently, a hotel's ability to collect, analyse, and act on guest feedback is not just a matter of customer service; it is a strategic imperative.

### **Online reputation crucial**

Online hotel reservation platforms such as Tripadvisor, Booking.com, Agoda and social media platforms amplify the guest's voice, allowing a single review to reach thousands, if not millions, of potential customers. High ratings and positive reviews enhance a hotel's online visibility, making it more likely to be chosen by travellers. Similarly, negative feedback can deter potential guests and damage the hotel's reputation.





• **Hotel Property Management Systems:** Modern PMS solutions go beyond managing room bookings and billing. They capture and store guest details, including room and F&B preferences, offering insights into the guest experience at every touchpoint. It allows hotels to analyse them to provide better and more personalised services. The objective is simple—

liers to new reviews and feedback. More advanced systems use artificial intelligence to analyse sentiments and identify trends, helping hotels understand overall guest satisfaction and pinpoint areas for improvement. They also facilitate timely and appropriate responses to feedback, demonstrating the hotel's commitment to guest satisfaction.



**Aditya Sanghi**  
CEO  
Hotelogix

**Understanding the pivotal role of guest feedback is about more than just managing online ratings**

enabling hotels to serve their guests better to make them happy. And happy guests are more likely to write positive feedback, leading to an improved reputation.

• **Online reputation management tools:** These specialised software solutions monitor the web for hotel mentions across various platforms, alerting hote-

• **Feedback/review management systems:** These tools allow hotels to automate the process of collecting and analysing guest feedback through surveys, emails, and SMS. This is an effective way for hotels to collect guest feedback in one place, allowing them to monitor, manage, and respond appropriately.

• **The human touch:** While technology offers powerful tools for managing feedback and online reputation, the human element remains irreplaceable. Personalised responses to reviews, empathetic handling of complaints, and genuine guest interactions are crucial for building trust and loyalty.

For hotels, the undeniable link between guest feedback, online reputation, and the vital role of technology in orchestrating these elements is evident. Those hotels that prioritise listening to their guests, thoughtfully addressing their feedback, and relentlessly pursuing excellence will flourish in this highly competitive environment.

*(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same)* □

### Guest satisfaction imperative

According to research, a significant percentage of travellers (about 75 to 80 per cent) read around 4-5 reviews on multiple platforms before booking a hotel. Therefore, hotels must have positive online ratings and reviews to attract more guests. Additionally, hotels can increase their room rates by as much as 4 to 5 per cent by improving their online ratings by just one point. Guests will pay a premium for hotels with excellent reviews and top ratings.

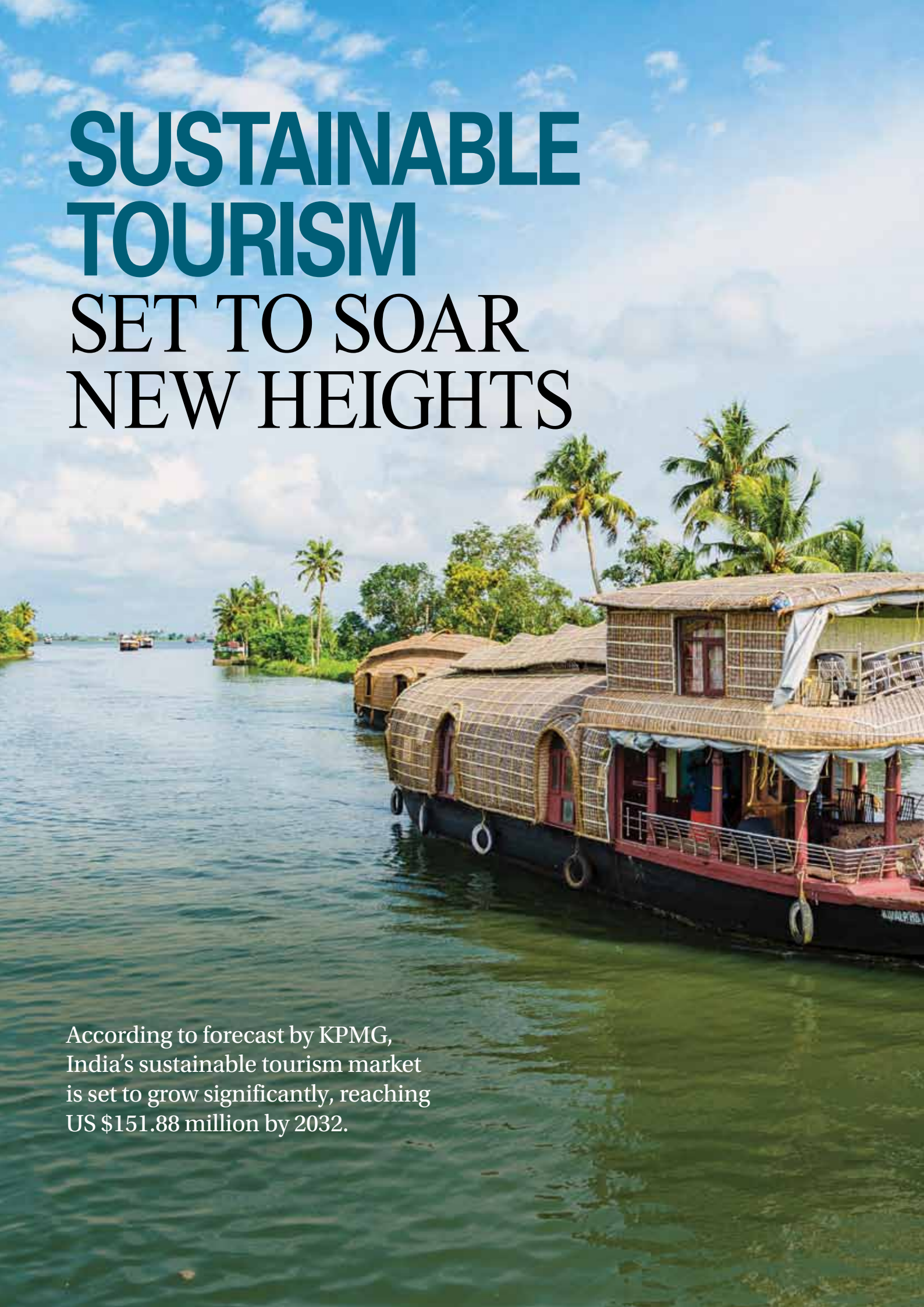
### Role of technology

Recognising the importance of guest feedback and online reputation, hotels are increasingly interested in investing in technology to automate and streamline this aspect of their operations.

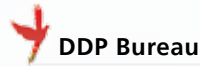


# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM SET TO SOAR NEW HEIGHTS

According to forecast by KPMG,  
India's sustainable tourism market  
is set to grow significantly, reaching  
US \$151.88 million by 2032.







**K**PMG India, in collaboration with PHD Chambers of Commerce & Industry, Hotel Association of India, and FHRAI, has released a report titled 'Sustainability in Tourism: Reimagining India's Sustainable Tourism Evolution'. The report estimates the global sustainable tourism market size to hit around US \$9.17 trillion by 2032 from US \$2.73 trillion in 2023 while sustainable tourism in India would reach US \$151.88 million by 2032 from US \$26.01 million in 2022. Here are the highlights from the report:

## India's public and private sectors are working together to develop sustainable tourism through innovative models and initiatives

➤ **Understanding sustainable tourism:** Sustainable tourism aims to balance economic and social benefits with environmental conservation, promoting biodiversity preservation, poverty reduction, and global development goals, while balancing tourists' needs with destination needs.

➤ **Indian practices to promote sustainable tourism:** India's public and private sectors are working together to develop sustainable tourism through innovative models and initiatives. With respect to it, a few businesses have focussed on the following sustainability criteria:

- **Environment conservation and rural living:** Organizations are promoting environmental preservation, rural living, community-centred tourism, and reducing carbon footprints by educating travellers, supporting local economies, preserving culture, and offering eco-friendly dining.

- **Engaging local communities:** Companies are offering curated, end-to-end tours to offbeat villages, involving stays, transportation, meals, activities, games, and cultural programmes, engaging local communities and providing immersive cultural experiences.

- **Birding and wildlife excursions:** Tour companies foster sustainable tourism by promoting appreciation for nature, biodiversity, local flora and fauna, culture, textiles, crafts, and archaeology for meaningful experiences.

- **Trekking by promoting sustainability:** Trekkers are implementing innovative waste collection models after completion of their treks, involving dedicated teams and enthusias-

tic trekkers, to ensure a clean environment for all involved.

- **Ecotravel to create sustainable livelihoods:** A group of companies has partnered to promote ecotourism, focussing on economic opportunities, environmental conservation, and cultural support for local communities.

➤ **Future of sustainable tourism in India:** Several predictions emerge about how sustainable tourism will shape and be influenced by India's unique landscapes, cultural diversity and economic dynamics.

- **A surge in eco-conscious travellers:** The next decade is predicted to see a significant rise in eco-conscious travellers, particularly in India, due to environmental awareness and a desire to preserve natural beauty.

- **Pioneering sustainable infrastructure:** India aims to become a global leader in sustainable tourism infrastructure, promoting eco-friendly accommodations like solar-powered hotels and bamboo cottages, supported by government incentives and green building policies.

- **Boost in rural and community-based tourism:** Tourism is shifting towards rural experiences, benefiting local economies, preserving cultural heritage, and distributing revenue more equitable through farm stays, local crafts workshops, and cultural immersion programmes.

## Next decade is predicted to see significant rise in eco-conscious travellers, particularly in India, due to environmental awareness

- **Focus on experiential travel:** Tourists seek authentic cultural experiences through traditional activities, local cuisine sampling, and community interaction, supported by towns' economies through sustainable tourism.

- **Emphasis on digital innovation for sustainability:** Digital technology is poised to significantly enhance sustainable tourism practices by providing eco-friendly travel options and platforms, enabling responsible travel decisions and reducing carbon footprints.

- **Expansion of green certifications & standards:** Green certifications and sustainability standards are gaining popularity as they serve as benchmarks for tourists and businesses, focusing on energy efficiency, waste management, and economic benefits for local communities. □

# HOSPITALITY JOB MARKET GAINS MOMENTUM



Hospitality sector is witnessing evolving hiring patterns driven by seasonal changes and global events, underscoring the importance of flexibility.

 Sakshi Singh

Tourism and allied sectors such as hospitality make up around 3 per cent of India's GDP. For perspective, the share of tourism in France's GDP is 8 per cent and for Thailand the figure is 18 per cent. India has substantial progress to make, but the recent trend indicates positive developments in the sector. The rise in domestic travellers and the changing global tourism scenario after COVID is creating a robust demand for jobs in the hospitality sector. While the growing number of job opportunities is positive for the many individuals aspiring to work in hospitality, it is crucial to grasp the intricacies of this demand.

According to TeamLease, the industry's employment landscape has been equally dynamic, marked by a notable increase in apprentice and trainee recruitment. It has



**Vijay E Gaikwad**  
Director, HR  
Meluha The Fern An Ecotel  
Hotel

**Specific volume of CVs can vary based on several factors, including region, time of year & global events impacting tourism**





**Clifford Dsilva**  
GM, HR  
The Orchid Hotel,  
Mumbai

**Hotels are actively seeking candidates with honed skills specific to each department, a results-oriented approach & stability**

ciency in the field for which he or she is being considered. For instance, if he or she is looking for a front office position, he or she needs to have an idea about the same,” Gaikwad said. Similar requirements were highlighted by **Clifford Dsilva**, GM, HR, The Orchid Hotel, Mumbai. “The hotels are actively seeking candidates with honed skills specific to each department, a results-oriented approach, and stability,” Dsilva explained. □

soared by 54 per cent CAGR over the past two years. This period has seen a staggering 271 per cent rise in overall hiring within the hospitality sector. The resurgence of tourism has played a pivotal role in this employment boom, with food & beverage (F&B) roles experiencing a 37 per cent increase, housekeeping positions rising by 22 per cent, and more specialized, higher-level positions witnessing an 8 to 10 per cent upturn.

The sector’s job market is highly dynamic, with the number of CVs received fluctuating in response to various factors. “The specific volume of CVs can vary based on several factors, including the region, time of year, and global events impacting travel and tourism,” said **Vijay E Gaikwad**, Director, Human Resources, Meluha The Fern An Ecotel Hotel.

He further pointed out, “For instance, during peak travel seasons, there is a surge

in job applications, while external factors such as economic downturns can lead to a reduction in the number of applicants.”

Hotels require skilled employees in most departments ranging from front of house, housekeeping, culinary, and administrative roles. The diversity in job roles reflects the multi-faceted nature of hospitality services, which require a wide range of skills and expertise to cater to the diverse needs of guests. Some departments, however, are witnessing faster growth and need a higher quantity of people.

A decade ago, people could expect to get hired with little specific skillset and learn on the job. Times have changed presently, and managers are looking for well-rounded individuals who can contribute to various aspects of hospitality services. “HR is looking for a variety of skills when a person is interviewed. The first and foremost requirement is his or her profi-



# Products & Services

## Charm your kitchen with desi kettle

Clay Craft's India Circus Ivory Parade Fantasy Desi Kettle is a blend of traditional Indian charm and contemporary design. This kettle is a standout addition to any kitchen or dining space, featuring a vibrant and captivating design inspired by India's rich cultural heritage. The ivory base showcases colourful motifs, reminiscent of traditional Indian patterns and imagery. The kettle is made from high-quality ceramic, ensuring durability and efficiency. Its ergonomic handle provides a comfortable grip, and the spout allows for easy pouring without drips or spills.



## Artistry unleashed

Mixx Doors has introduced a new collection of luxury glass doors, aiming to redefine interior design standards. These doors are a blend of innovation and elegance, transforming ordinary doorways into artistic statements. The collection includes frosted glass doors for privacy and tranquillity, perfect for intimate settings such as bedrooms or private offices, and clear glass doors for space and openness. Mixx Doors' Luxury Glass Doors offer versatility in contemporary urban lofts, luxurious residences, and sophisticated office spaces. Embrace the transformative power of luxury with doors that redefine elegance and sophistication.

## Diverse designs, vibrant colours

SPIN's Summer/Spring Collection offers a diverse range of colours and product designs to revitalise living spaces and bring a renewed sense of purpose. The brand, founded by a group of friends with diverse expertise, is committed to enhancing everyday experiences through collaborations with designers and ongoing feedback. Their products, including living room furniture, outdoor essentials, and home accessories, are crafted with craftsmanship, longevity, and clean expression in mind. Examples include the Cora collection, which transforms everyday objects into modern aesthetics, and the Treyo Tray, which adds flair to serving or organizing tasks.





## Innovative luxury

Strrot, a luxury furniture and lifestyle brand based in Delhi, has partnered with Italian design brand Seletti to bring a new wave of design excellence to India. The partnership combines Seletti's elegant furniture and accessories with Strrot's expertise, providing a convenient solution for those looking to spruce up their living spaces. The Rio Lamp, a whimsical representation of Seletti's commitment to storytelling and creativity, is a standout piece. The Peacock Lamp and Monkey Lamps, imbued with Seletti's trademark creativity and craftsmanship, serve as chic focal points in interior design.



## Elevating outdoor elegance


Sarita Handa Now and ABACA, Mumbai, have partnered to launch a range of all-weather furniture that combines contemporary style and elegance. Inspired by wabi-sabi, feng shui biophilia, and minimalism, the collection includes sofas, dining chairs, coffee tables, side tables, planters, and baskets. The furniture is made from teakwood and powder-coated aluminium, woven with UV-resistant weaves that replicate natural abaca and Hyacinth fibers. The collection is designed to bring comfort and splendour of the indoors to the outside, blending vintage inspiration with a modern perspective.

## Durability meets sophistication

Vetra has introduced a sophisticated sofa set comprising a 3-seater and 2-seater sofa, along with a center table featuring marble and wooden tops. Designed with meticulous attention to detail, this set promises both durability and sophistication. The seating is skillfully woven with polypropylene rope, ensuring comfort and longevity. The aluminum frame undergoes a rigorous 7-layer powder coating process, ensuring resilience against wear and tear. Cushions are upholstered in premium Agora fabric, enhancing both comfort and style. Teakwood legs add a touch of elegance to the ensemble. Experience the perfect balance of aesthetics and practicality with the versatile and stylish sofa set collection.



## Exquisite home decor

Mira Living by Mantra One is a luxury home decor brand founded by Jatin Kapoor, focusing on the transformative power of design. The brand offers a curated assortment of items such as cushions, vases, lamps, sculptures, wall art, and accent furniture to enhance every aspect of home living. The brand's ethos is centered on exemplary design, with a focus on fresh perspectives and innovation. Mira Living's modern, nuanced, and sumptuous tone resonates with discerning homeowners, enhancing their living spaces with exclusive home decor solutions. 

# LUXURIOUS TENTS STEAL GLOBAL LIMELIGHT

Evoke Experiences provided luxurious Rajwadi tents for Anant Ambani's pre-wedding celebrations, demonstrating their remote accommodation expertise.

 **Surbhi Sharma**

The pre-wedding celebrations of Anant Ambani, youngest son of Reliance Chairperson Mukesh Ambani, and Radhika Merchant, daughter of industrialist Viren Merchant, in Gujarat's Jamnagar in March grabbed global attention, with who's who from across the globe present to bless the twosome.

## Indian vendors shine


Reliance Foundation Chairperson and Anant Ambani's mother Nita Ambani relied on local artisans, designers, and service providers for the arrangements. VIP guests were housed in luxury tents at the Reliance Greens Complex, equipped with lounge areas, living-cum-master bedrooms, dressing rooms, and washrooms. These temporary accommodations hosted VIP guests from various parts of the world. The 900-sq ft luxurious Rajwadi



**Bhavik Sheth**  
COO  
Evoke Experiences

tents were created by Evoke Experiences. Speaking on the same, **Bhavik Sheth**, COO, Evoke Experiences, said, "We created about 60-62 luxury accommodations and the size of the tents was 900-sq ft with all the luxurious amenities. We took inspiration from the luxury suites that we created in Rann Utsav, the tent city in Dhordo, Kutch."

Sharing more details, he added, "We are known for creating luxury in remote locations, where it is very difficult to construct a building or a hotel in a very short period. All the tents were luxurious. The facilities, furniture, and the bathroom amenities were equivalent as that of 5-star hotels. The overall feedback and the arrangements were appreciated by everyone who stayed there and the management team of Ambani was quite happy with the facilities we created."

Sheth believes that events like these would open new doors for them. 

**We created about 60-62 luxury accommodations and size of the tents was 900-sq ft with all the luxurious amenities**





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# MOVEMENTS



**ANUPAM BANERJEE**  
**Vice President, F&B,**  
**Atmosphere Core**

★ Atmosphere Core has appointed Anupam Banerjee as the Vice President, Food & Beverage. Banerjee, a culinary expert will oversee Atmosphere Core's three brands: The OZEN COLLECTION, COLOURS OF OBLU, and Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts. Banerjee will supervise F&B teams at all resorts within the company portfolio apart from creating award-winning culinary experiences. He has held leadership roles at international brands, including The St. Regis Bangkok, where he managed four outlets and a speciality restaurant with a MICHELIN Star rating.



**BINAY KUMAR SINGH**  
**Director, Sales,**  
**Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru**

★ Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru has appointed Binay Kumar Singh as the Director, Sales. His previous roles include Director, Sales at Taj Yeshwantpur and Taj Bekal Resort and Spa. Singh's expertise extends beyond sales and marketing to business strategy, financial analysis, customer relationship management, and revenue management. His leadership skills, coupled with a keen understanding of market dynamics, have consistently contributed to the success of the properties he has been associated with. He has over 18 years of experience in the hospitality sector.



**MAYANK TUTEJA**  
**Director, Sales, South Asia,**  
**Preferred Hotels & Resorts**

★ Preferred Hotels & Resorts has announced Mayank Tuteja as Director, Sales, South Asia. Tuteja has over 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry and has honed his expertise in sales and marketing in both regional and global roles. Prior to joining Preferred Hotels & Resorts, Tuteja held positions at The Leading Hotels of the World and Hyatt. The hotel chain has also appointed Shakun Khandelwal as Senior Sales Manager, South Asia. Their robust in-region expertise will help Preferred Hotels & Resorts leverage the market to accelerate outbound business.



**SAGAR KULKARNI**  
**Director, F&B, Sheraton Grand**  
**Pune Bund Garden Hotel**

★ Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel has appointed Sagar Kulkarni as the Director, Food & Beverage. Kulkarni has a proven track record in various establishments, including Hilton Mumbai International Airport and Sofitel Luxury Hotels Mumbai BKC. Kulkarni has been instrumental in implementing guest recognition programmes, introducing incentives, and optimising guest recognition across all outlets. His collaboration with finance departments and direct responsibility for F&B marketing has resulted in numerous prestigious awards for the properties under his guidance.



**MANOJ JANGID**  
**General Manager**  
**Fairfield by Marriott**

★ Fairfield by Marriott has promoted Manoj Jangid to the position of General Manager, following his tenure as Hotel Manager. His cost management skills have significantly improved the hotel's operations. Jangid has a 21-year career in the hospitality industry, starting at Taj President Mumbai and then Grand Hyatt Mumbai. He has also held positions at brands such as Grand Hyatt Mumbai, Sofitel Mumbai, and JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar. In his new role, Jangid brings a wealth of experience and a proven track record of success.



**QADIR KHAN**  
**Executive Chef**  
**Aloft Bengaluru Outer Ring Road**

★ Qadir Khan has joined Aloft Bengaluru Outer Ring Road as Executive Chef. With over two decades of culinary expertise, Khan has led large-scale kitchen operations for brands such as JW Marriott, The Westin, and Holiday Inn. Chef Khan is passionate about Hyderabad cuisine and preserving its heritage while embracing innovation. With a strong foundation in food production and a love for Hyderabad flavours, he is dedicated to sharing the culinary delights of this cuisine with enthusiasts worldwide. Chef Khan received his professional qualification from IIHMC, Hyderabad.





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- Designed with Dual Fan, This combination helps machine to work in any environment.
- Errors Display for quick support.



Model	Power	Watt	Dimensions	Remote	Cutout Size	Remote Size	Weight
INS101D	230VAC 50HZ	500	340x340x100mm	External	314x314mm	144x50mm	5.2Kg
INS62D	230VAC 50HZ	500	380x380x100mm	External	360x360mm	97x100mm	6.2Kg
INSP20D	230VAC 50HZ	500	296x370x75mm	Inbuilt	275x350mm	Inbuilt	4.5Kg
INS2BRA	230VAC 50HZ	1000	800X400X100mm	Inbuilt	787X387mm	Inbuilt	9.700Kg
INS3BRA	230VAC 50HZ	1500	1200X500X82mm	Inbuilt	1205X505mm	Inbuilt	25.338Kg

### EQUIPSOL INNOVATIONS

Unit No. 511-B, 5th Floor, Welldone Tech Park, Sector-48, Sohna Road, Gurgaon, Hr.-122002

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