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A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE
By DDP Publications



Incredible India



**FHRAI ELECTS
SURENDRA K JAISWAL
AS PRESIDENT**

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ANNUAL CONVENTION
MAPS GROWTH PATH FOR
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

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President's Note



Dear Members and Stakeholders,

I am deeply honoured to assume the office of President of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), along with my team of office bearers and members of the Executive Committee, at the conclusion of the 69th Annual General Meeting held on 27th September 2025 in New Delhi.

It is a great privilege to follow in the footsteps of visionary hoteliers who have shaped the FHRAI's legacy. At the same time, I am fully conscious of the immense responsibilities that this role brings to me and my colleagues on board. As we all know, our industry stands today at a critical inflection point. On one hand, we see a rapidly growing sector with immense promise; on the other, we face significant challenges in ensuring competitiveness and sustainability. Complex regulations, high taxation, fragmented policies, and a widening skill gap continue to hinder our progress.

While the recent revision of GST rates is a laudable step towards rationalisation, it has also created structural cost burdens, particularly for budget hotels. The absence of Input Tax Credit (ITC) has resulted in inequities that threaten the industry's competitiveness and long-term viability.

Our task ahead is both challenging and crucial — to work hand in hand with the government and all stakeholders to bring relief to our members, while empowering India's hospitality sector to realise its true potential as a major contributor to the nation's GDP.

Over the past seven decades, FHRAI has stood as the collective voice of Indian hospitality — building bridges among stakeholders, driving impactful policy advocacy, and nurturing talent to meet the aspirations of a fast-evolving nation. This legacy was once again reaffirmed through the resounding success of our recently concluded 55th Annual Convention.

The 2025 Convention, hosted in the vibrant city of Bengaluru, was truly exceptional. It brought together an extraordinary constellation of leaders, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and innovators. Supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and partnered by the states of Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh,

and Madhya Pradesh, the convention highlighted the strength of regional participation and the importance of collective progress.

The deliberations at the convention charted a clear roadmap for achieving Viksit Bharat through Viksit Tourism by 2047. Our state partners played a vital role by showcasing their unique tourism offerings, heritage, and culinary diversity — reaffirming that India's tourism tapestry is strongest when states innovate and collaborate.



Enhancing the brand value of FHRAI, FHRAI-IHM, and FHRAI-CERTH through impactful campaigns, strategic partnerships, and knowledge-driven initiatives."

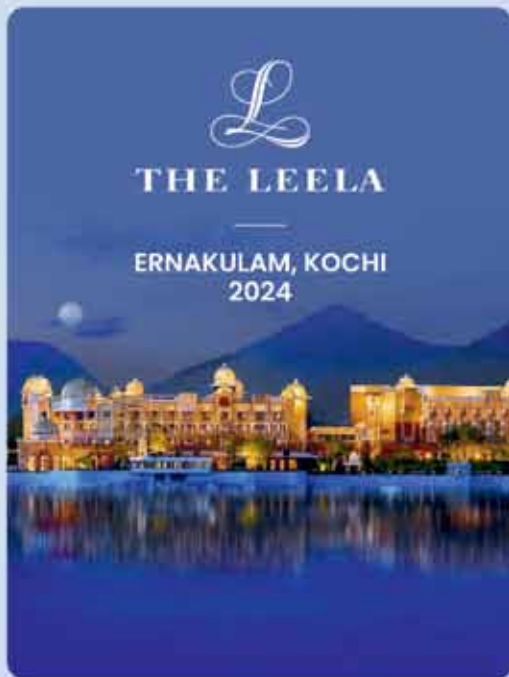
Looking ahead, FHRAI is committed to enhancing the brand value of FHRAI, FHRAI-IHM, and FHRAI-CERTH through impactful campaigns, strategic partnerships, and knowledge-driven initiatives. Our agenda includes impactful research publications and policy dialogues focused on workforce, sustainability and taxation, thematic conferences, and investment facilitation platforms to boost India's global competitiveness, along with comprehensive skilling and upskilling programmes to nurture the next generation of hospitality leaders. We also plan to undertake in-depth studies and summits on tourism policies, human resources, and global best practices — all designed to shape a future-ready hospitality ecosystem.

As President of FHRAI, I am humbled by the unwavering support of our members, government authorities, partners, and all stakeholders who continue to inspire us to strive for greater heights.

Warm regards,
Surendra Kumar Jaiswal
President, FHRAI

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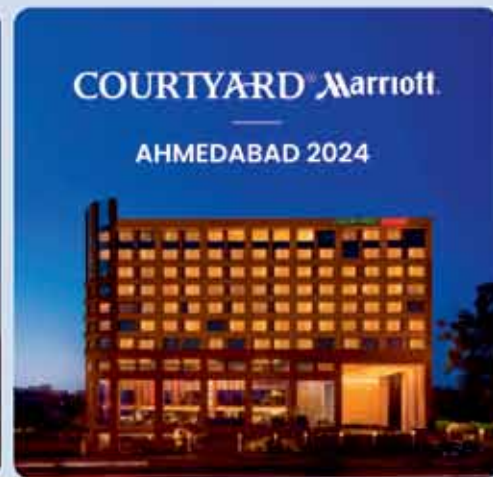


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Surendra K Jaiswal takes over as FHRAI President

As the new President of FHRAI, Surendra Kumar Jaiswal set a decisive agenda, underscoring industry status & reinstatement of ITC as his key focus areas.



The Economics of Tourism: The India Story

At its 55th Annual Convention, FHRAI brought together policymakers and hospitality leaders to highlight India's tourism opportunities and impact.



HRAEI elects Sudesh Poddar as its President

At the 64th AGM, HRAEI elected its new leadership and representatives to the FHRAI Committee, reaffirming its commitment to hospitality growth.



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Jimmy Shaw re-appointed as HRAWI President

Re-elected as HRAWI President, Jimmy Shaw laid out a forward-looking agenda from GST rationalisation to hospitality growth.



Brand is belief

Panellists at the 55th FHRAI Annual Convention discussed strategic priorities to elevate India's hospitality brands on the global map.



Luxury experiences, beyond categories

Experiential luxury now spans every segment of India's hospitality, driving towards a trillion dollar experience economy.



Unboxing India's tier II & III potential

As India's hospitality landscape evolves, tier II & III cities are emerging as strategic growth corridors, unlocking new opportunities.

SECRETARY GENERAL
Jaison Chacko - sg@fhrai.com

PUBLISHER
Devika Jeet - devika@ddppl.com

CHIEF EDITOR
Nisha Verma - nisha.verma@ddppl.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Lipla Negi - lipla.negi@ddppl.com

DESK EDITOR
Potshangbam July - july.potshangbam@ddppl.com

DESIGNER
Ashim Sarkar

DESIGNERS ADVERTISEMENT
Nitin Kumar
Addiya Pratap Singh
Anil Khatri Chhetri

PRODUCTION
Anil Kharbanda - General Manager

Ramesh Gupta - Manager

MARKETING & SALES
DELHI
Nikhil Jeet - Nikhil.jeet@ddppl.com
Director Advertising (+91 9910031313)

Meetu Malhotra - meetu.malhotra@ddppl.com
Assistant Vice President (+91 9650911399)

Jaspreet Kaur - jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com
Marketing Manager (+91 9650196532)

MUMBAI
Harshal Ashar - harshal@ddppl.com
General Manager (+91 9619499167)

Samantha Pereira - Samantha.pereira@ddppl.com
Assistant Manager (+91 9987550769)

THE FEDERATION OF HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATIONS OF INDIA
B-82, 8th Floor, Himalaya House
Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi 110001
Tel: 91-11-40780780, Fax: +91-11-40780777
Email: fhrai@fhrai.com

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Surendra K Jaiswal

elected as FHRAI President

As the new President of FHRAI, **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal** set a decisive agenda, underscoring industry status & reinstatement of ITC as his key focus areas.



Lipla Negi

At the 69th Annual General Meeting of FHRAI, **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal** has been elected as the new President of the association. Outlining his vision for the 2025–26 tenure, he called for immediate government action to safeguard the future of hospitality, a sector that directly and indirectly supports over 60 million livelihoods and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

In his powerful address at the press-briefing as the President, Jaiswal highlighted that 90 percent of India's hotels operate below a room tariff of ₹7,500 and are now subject to a Goods and Service Tax (GST) at 5 percent without Input Tax Credit (ITC). Although the recent revision in the GST rates is a continued effort to rationalise tax rates in order to benefit consumers, improve compliance, and support growth, he noted, it has turned into an added cost for guests and created structural cost burdens on hotels, particularly in tier II and tier III cities. He stressed that the withdrawal of ITC has escalated unrecoverable costs on rentals, utilities, outsourced manpower, and capital expenditure, deterring investments and threatening the growth of domestic tourism. FHRAI called for reinstating ITC at the earliest and issuing a clarificatory circular to remove compliance ambiguities.

He applauded the Delhi government and Chief Minister **Rekha Gupta** for implementing Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena's June 2025

directive to abolish police licensing for hotels and six other commercial sectors, including guest houses, restaurants, and auditoriums. With the Delhi Police formally withdrawing these licenses in July 2025 and transferring authority to civic bodies such as the MCD and NDMC, the reform marks a major step toward simplifying business regulations. He said that the move is expected to spur growth and usher in a faster, more

transparent and business-friendly approval system.

Seeking government's support, he said, "Our industry is one of the largest generators of employment and a key driver of India's service economy. Yet, the GST framework without ITC has created inequities that threaten our competitiveness. We are not seeking concessions but fairness, clarity, and parity. By restoring ITC, addressing copyright ambi-



Key Focus Areas

Policy Advocacy & Engagement with Government

Thematic Conferences/ Conclaves & Flagship Events

Branding, Image Building & Media Advocacy

Centre of Excellence for Research in Tourism & Hospitality

Research & Knowledge Partnership

Enhancing Organizational Quality & Efficiency

Enabling FHRAI – IHM an Institution of Excellence in Hospitality

Affiliation & Partnerships

Members Redressal Cell

Preferred Vendors for New Projects

Preferred Vendors for Existing Hotels

Annual Convention

guities, and granting infrastructure and industry Status, the government can empower hospitality to support the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and secure India's rightful place as a global tourism hub."

Beyond GST reforms, he spotlighted the long-standing challenge of copyright harassment, where multiple societies levy overlapping royalty demands on hotels and restaura-

rants — burdening them with undue legal and financial strain. He urged the government to clearly define the roles of copyright societies, prevent duplicate collections for the same content, and protect establishments from wrongful litigation.

Workforce empowerment

Outlining FHRAI's broader vision, he emphasised the push for infra-

structure and full industry status for the hospitality sector — a move that could unlock low-cost financing, spur balanced regional growth, and attract fresh investments in smaller cities and emerging destinations. He also called for ease of doing business reforms, including simplified licensing and a single window clearance system to cut through process delays.





Policy Advocacy & Engagement with Government

Major Issues of the Hospitality Sector

- GST Rationalisation, Delinking & Demand Notices
- Infrastructure & Industry Status to Hospitality Sector
- Ease of Doing Business in Hospitality
- Single Window System of Copyright Licensing and Equitable Distribution of Royalties/Actual Users to take License
- Lack of Skilled Workforce
- Service Charge Matter
- Removal of Hospitality Industry from Red Category

Intervention Strategies

- State Level Conclaves in Partnership with Regional Associations
- Representations
- Interactive Session With Government
- Call on Meetings
- Media Advocacy throughout India
- Creation of Redressal Cell
- Facilitating Trainings and Skill Development

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Reinforcing the human core of hospitality, he reminded that the industry's strength lies in its people — from hoteliers to farmers. Calling farmers the backbone of the industry, he pledged to strengthen their connection with hospitality and drive socio-economic growth at the grassroots level during his tenure. "Under the farm-to-table initiative, we encourage hotels to source fresh, organic produce directly from farmers, ensuring quality ingredients while supporting local agriculture," he said.

A strategic roadmap

Highlighting his intervention strategy, he shared a comprehensive roadmap to strengthen industry engagement and policy advocacy. He said, "FHRAI plans to organise state-level conclaves in partnership with regional associations to ensure

that local voices shape national priorities." The association will further intensify its representations and interactive sessions with government authorities, supported by regular call-on meetings to address policy bottlenecks. A strong focus will also be placed on media advocacy across India to amplify industry concerns and successes. Additionally, FHRAI will establish a "Redressal Cell" to handle member grievances efficiently and facilitate training and skill development initiatives to empower hospitality professionals and bridge talent gaps across the sector.

Besides this, he is also focusing on strengthening the overall value and visibility of FHRAI, FHRAI-IHM, and FHRAI's Centre of Excellence for Research in Tourism & Hospitality (CERTH). His strategy includes forming sectoral sub-committees to promote various segments of the hospitality industry and nurture young leadership within the association.

He is also exploring the launch of an official FHRAI YouTube channel dedicated to tourism and hospitality-related news and discussions. Furthermore, FHRAI will ensure a strong presence at all major tourism events across the country, reinforcing its position as the collective voice of India's hospitality sector.

"Under the farm-to-table initiative, we encourage hotels to source fresh, organic produce directly from farmers."

Research excellence

Under his leadership, FHRAI is charting a knowledge-driven course for the industry through the establishment of the Centre of Excellence for Research in Tourism & Hospitality (CERTH). Envisioned as India's leading national resource hub for tourism and hospitality research, CERTH aims to empower the sector with data-driven insights, foster digital innovation, and promote sustainable growth to strengthen India's global competitiveness.

The Centre's objectives revolve around building research excellence, encouraging information dissemination, promoting evidence-based policy advocacy, and fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and government bodies. It also aims to strengthen data collection across the tourism and hospitality value





“Our industry is one of the largest generators of employment and a key driver of India’s service economy.”

word — not just as a grand gathering of the industry, but as a meaningful platform for action, collaboration, and transformation.

His vision is to ensure that every participant — from policymakers and hotel owners to young entrepreneurs and students — gains tangible value and real takeaways from the convention.

By encouraging open dialogue, outcome-oriented sessions, and cross-sector participation, he aims to turn the convention into a catalyst for progressive policy changes, stronger industry-government partnerships, and innovative solutions that benefit the entire hospitality ecosystem. In his view, the convention’s true success lies in its ability to inspire ideas that translate into measurable impact for all stakeholders. ■

chain, enabling informed decision-making and targeted interventions.

In terms of programmes and activities, CERTH will publish research reports, host policy dialogues, and organise thematic conferences on emerging issues. It will also facilitate tourism and hospitality investments, champion sustainability initiatives,

and drive large-scale skilling and upskilling programmes to prepare the workforce for the evolving demands of the sector.

Bigger goals

Jaiswal is proactively working to make the FHRAI Annual Convention a true success in every sense of the

Thematic Conferences & Flagship Events

Flagship Events



Proposed Foreign Business Delegation Visits



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The Economics of Tourism: The India Story

At its 55th Annual Convention, FHRAI brought together policymakers and hospitality leaders to highlight India's tourism opportunities and impact.



Lipla Negi

Serving as both a think tank and a launchpad of strategic direction, the 55th FHRAI Annual Convention highlighted the tourism and hospitality sector's power to influence the nation's economy. Political leaders lauded the economic significance of the sector, while hoteliers outlined the strategic steps propelling its remarkable growth.

Invoking the unique tapestry of experiences, Karnataka Chief Minister **Siddaramaiah** emphasised how Bengaluru is relentlessly working towards building a world-class hospitality ecosystem. "Domestic tourist footfall was projected to reach ₹30.46 crore in 2024, building up a strong 58 percent surge since 2022. But behind these numbers lies the story of people, as the hospitality sector



generated 12 lakh direct and indirect jobs. The sector contributes approximately ₹25,000 crore to our economy. Our capital, Bengaluru, has emerged

as a premier global hub for MICE tourism, attracting high-value events that account for 15 per cent of the country's total MICE business. Additionally, our eco-tourism initiatives have witnessed a 20 percent growth."

Spotlighting the new Karnataka Tourism Policy 2024–2029, which envisions creating 1.5 lakh new jobs and attracting ₹8,000 crore in investment by 2029, he added, "The policy focuses on enhancing infrastructure, skill development, sustainability, and global marketing." Amplifying this vision, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Union Tourism Minister, highlighted India's projection to become a US\$ 30 trillion economy by 2047. Underlining the rising demand for hospitality, he noted the industry status granted to 50 iconic destinations, with 18 states having extended this recognition.





He emphasised that investments made today will drive tourism and hospitality growth for the future. “In future, the growth of infrastructure will be unprecedented. Hospitality will be the direct beneficiary of this growth. In the coming ten years, we will move from a 4 trillion to an 8 trillion economy.”

Looking forward to the positive outcomes, **DK Shivakumar**, Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka,

expressed his appreciation for the industry in his keynote address to the fraternity. He said, “I am confident that after three days of deliberation, you will share strategic suggestions with us, the policymakers, and together we will work towards strengthening Karnataka’s economy. Plans are also underway to develop the state’s 320 km coastline, further enhancing Karnataka’s position as a top-tier tourism destination. A few

“The sector contributes approximately ₹25,000 crore to the economy.”

weeks ago, I personally spoke to **K Syama Raju**, President, FHRAI, regarding the development of a convention centre along Nelaman-gala Road, which is also seeing interest from leading international hotel chains.”

Drawing alignments between FHRAI’s Annual Convention theme, Futurescape 2047 — Redefining Hospitality for New India, and Karnataka government’s tourism vision, **HK Patil**, Minister of Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Legislation of Karnataka, said, “Our tourism policy is a blueprint for growth, designed to create a supportive hospitality ecosystem.” He further highlighted the government’s tourism-friendly initiatives, including capital investment subsi-





Joining the audience not as a speaker but as a listener, **V Vidyavathi**, IAS, Secretary of Tourism, Government of India, called for a stronger public-private partnership as the government prepares its Tourism Business Plan. "To attract global tourists with meaningful experiences, we need to focus on country-specific strategies. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach for tourists coming to India from different parts of the world with varying expectations," she said. She further urged the stakeholders to share their ideas and suggestions for the government's five-year Tourism Business Plan, which aims to increase the sector's contribution to 10 percent of India's GDP. Besides, **K Syama Raju**, President, FHRAI, welcomed the recent GST reforms and underlined concerns requiring the government's proactive support. "Ease of Doing Business is another area where we are expecting far-reaching advancements."

On behalf of the Convention Organising Committee and FHRAI, **K Ravi** thanked the dignitaries for their strong support to the industry with their presence. "A convention of this scale cannot happen without strong partnerships. Each one of you is not just a sponsor, but a partner in progress," he concluded. □

dies of up to ₹5 crore for premium hotels, ₹2 crore for small hotels and ₹10 crore for convention centres, 50 percent exemption on stamp duty and 100 percent exemption on registration charges for land acquisition and land documentation, 100 percent reimbursement on land conversion fees, and industry status for hospitality projects — all measures that make Karnataka one of the most investment-friendly states.

Adding to it, **MB Patil**, Minister, Large and Medium Scale Industries excluding Sugar, Karnataka, said, "Hospitality in Karnataka is among India's top tourism states, with around 4 lakh foreign tourist arrivals and 25 crore domestic tourist arrivals in 2024." Looking ahead, Patil noted that the sector will be a catalyst for job creation, investments, and boost Karnataka's reputation on the global stage."



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Moulding the future

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HRANI delegation meets Delhi CM, lauds govt's progressive reforms

HRANI delegation appreciated proactive steps taken by the govt, reaffirming its commitment to working closely on initiatives boosting the sector.



DDP Bureau

A senior delegation from HRANI recently met Delhi Chief Minister **Rekha Gupta** to extend greetings and appreciation for key reforms benefiting the hospitality sector.

The delegation was led by **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, FHRAI and Immediate Past President and Managing Committee Member, HRANI; **Garish Oberoi**, Treasurer, HRANI; **Vinod**

Gulati, Honorary Joint Secretary, HRANI; **Renu Thapliyal**, Secretary General; and managing committee members, including **Virendra Teotia**, **Pranay Aneja**, and **Meena Bhatia**.

During the meeting, the delegation thanked the Chief Minister for removing the police license for hotels and restaurants — a reform that has significantly eased compliance requirements and



improved operational efficiency for HRANI members. □

World Tourism Day observed with spiritual vibes

In alignment with the UN's 2025 theme, HRANI marked World Tourism Day with a spiritually enriching session aimed at positive change in tourism.



DDP Bureau

HRANI observed World Tourism Day with an insightful session aligned with the United Nations theme for 2025, "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation." The event brought together members of the hospitality community to reflect on the evolving role of tourism as a force for positive change and mindful living.

The highlight of the occasion was an enlightening talk by **BK Khyati**, Senior Rajyoga Teacher and Programme Director of the Shipping, Aviation & Tourism Services Wing, Brahma Kumaris. Dedicated

to bridging spirituality with professional excellence, Khyati shared profound insights on how industries like tourism, aviation, and shipping act as bridges of peace, connecting people across borders and cultures.

The session left attendees inspired to view tourism not merely as an economic activity but as a transformative journey — one that nurtures harmony, sustainability, and global unity. The event underscored HRANI's commitment to promoting a holistic

approach to tourism that integrates professional growth with personal well-being and sustainability. □





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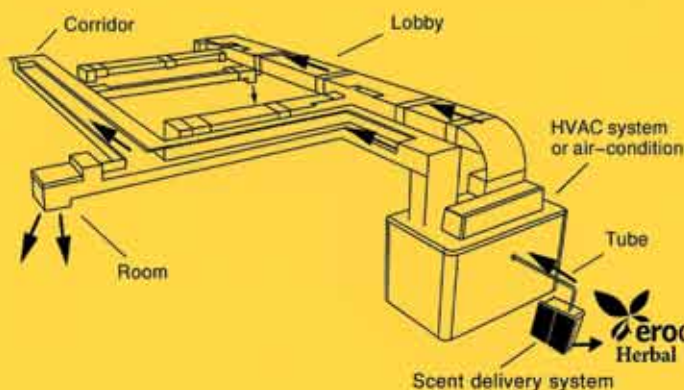
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HRAEI elects Sudesh Poddar as its President

At the 64th AGM, HRAEI elected its new leadership and representatives to the FHRAI Committee, reasserting its commitment to hospitality growth.



Sudesh Poddar has been elected again as the president of HRAEI at the 64th Annual General Meeting (AGM), held in Kolkata. He previously served as president of FHRAI, and his vast experience has secured him key roles within prestigious bodies, including the Hotel & Restaurant Approval & Classification Committee (HRACC) (Eastern Region), West Bengal State Tourism Task Force, and FSSAI, among others.

“It is an honour to be elected as president of HRAEI and to have the opportunity to serve the hospitality community of eastern India. Our industry has immense potential, but it also faces critical challenges that require united efforts,” said Poddar, noting, “Going forward, we must work collectively to strengthen our



sector, while engaging proactively with policymakers to resolve issues and unlock new opportunities for growth and innovation.”

With enthusiastic participation from hoteliers, restaurateurs, and industry stakeholders, the event witnessed the election of the asso-

“Engaging proactively with policymakers to resolve issues and unlock new opportunities for growth & innovation.”



ciation’s new Managing Committee. The committee elected new office bearers of HRAEI — **Sudesh Poddar** as President, **Mohammed Azhar** as Senior Vice President, **Manoja Kumar Gouda** as Vice President, **Pranav Singh** as Honorary Secretary, **Deepak Kapoor** as Honorary Treasurer, **Aneel Goenka** as Honorary Joint Secretary, and **Souvik Raha** as Honorary Joint Treasurer.

Alongside the internal leadership, HRAEI selected its representatives to the FHRAI Committee — **Sudesh Kumar Poddar**, **Pranav Singh**, **Girish Arora**, **Ashoke Singh**, **Sandeep Sehgal**, and **Vijay Dewan**. □

THEME



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Principal



Jimmy Shaw re-elected as HRAWI President

Re-appointed as HRAWI President, **Jimmy Shaw** outlined a forward-looking agenda focused on GST rationalisation and hospitality growth.



At the 75th Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on September 17, HRAWI re-elected **Jimmy Shaw**, Managing Director, The Waterfront Shaw, Lavasa, as its President. Continuing in their respective roles are **Nirav Gandhi** as Senior Vice President, **Chetan Mehta** as Vice President, and **Pradeep Shetty** as Honorary Secretary. **Gurbir Singh Bedi** has been appointed as Joint Honorary Secretary and **Paramjit Singh Ghai** is the new Honorary Treasurer of the association.

Over the last year, under Shaw's leadership, HRAWI spearheaded several high-impact initiatives, including GST rationalisation, advocacy on excise duty reforms, food safety, and organising the 'Empowering Hospitality' Conclave & Awards events, among others.

Meaningful change

"Being re-elected President during our 75th year is both an honour and a responsibility. Over the last year, we have built strong momentum on issues critical to the hospitality in-



JIMMY SHAW
Managing Director
The Waterfront Shaw, Lavasa

"We will work with state and central governments to streamline regulations and boost tourism competitiveness."

dustry, ranging from GST reforms to various processes under the Ease of Doing Business strategy. I am grate-

ful to our members and committee for their trust and support. Our collective achievements prove that when we speak with one voice, we can influence meaningful change," said Shaw.

Future developments

Looking ahead, HRAWI plans to deepen its focus on technology adoption, sustainability, and inclusivity while preparing for the landmark 20th Regional Convention in October 2025 at the Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai. The Platinum Jubilee edition will highlight hospitality's role in Viksit Maharashtra 2047 and its alignment with the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

"As we look to the future, the association will continue to work tirelessly to secure rationalised GST, ease regulatory bottlenecks, promote inclusivity and sustainability, and drive innovation. We will also work with state and central governments to streamline regulations and boost tourism competitiveness," Shaw noted, adding, "The upcoming 20th Regional Convention will be a platform to showcase our resilience, chart our vision for Viksit Maharashtra 2047, and cement our role as the leading voice of hospitality." □





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HRAWI urges the PM for GST rationalisation

With the removal of ITC increasing operational costs and discouraging new investments, HRAWI has appealed for the rationalisation of GST reforms.



HRAWI has submitted a comprehensive representation to the Prime Minister seeking urgent rationalisation of the newly announced GST structure for the hospitality industry. In its submission, the association has welcomed the government's commitment to next-generation GST reforms following the 56th GST Council Meeting but cautioned that the proposed levy of 5 percent GST without Input Tax Credit (ITC) on rooms priced below ₹7,500 could significantly impact business viability, fresh in-

The removal of ITC contradicts the foundational principle of GST that ensures a seamless flow of credit and avoiding tax cascading



JIMMY SHAW
President
HRAWI

vestments, and the affordability of tourism in India.

The representation underscored that the removal of ITC contradicts the foundational principle of GST; ensuring a seamless flow of credit and avoiding tax cascading. "While we appreciate the Government's intent to simplify GST and offer lower rates to end-consumers, the absence of ITC reverses years of progress towards a seamless tax-credit system. This will inflate costs for hotels, particularly those operating in the budget and mid-scale segment and could make accommodation less



DILIP KOTHARI
Tax Advisor
HRAWI

competitive compared to neighbouring countries," said **Jimmy Shaw**, President, HRAWI.

Major concerns

The association highlighted key concerns, including the increased cost of operations due to the denial of ITC. The cost of setting up new hotels will rise by at least 10 per cent, as credit won't be available on essential inputs like equipment, linen, and crockery. Hotels operating on leased premises, with rent comprising 20 to 25 percent of operational costs, will be disproportionately affected due to ineligible ITC.

"To balance consumer benefits with industry sustainability, we are proposing 5 percent GST with 50 percent ITC benefit similar to provisions for banking institutions, or 18 percent GST with full ITC on two-thirds of the value for rooms under ₹7,500. We also strongly recommend the delinking of F&B services from room tariffs and allowing F&B service providers to choose between 5 percent GST without ITC or 18 percent GST with full ITC," added **Dilip Kothari**, Tax Advisor, HRAWI. □



Maharashtra hotels to operate 24/7

Hailing it as a significant move, HRAWI opined that permitting hotels to operate 24/7 will bring operational flexibility and generate new job opportunities.



HRAWI has welcomed the Maharashtra Government's decision to allow shops, hotels, restaurants, and other establishments across the state to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The decision, announced via a circular dated 1 October, is a landmark development that will significantly enhance ease of doing business.

"This step is especially pertinent to Mumbai's aspiration of becoming a truly global city and

perfectly complements the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047," said **Jimmy Shaw**, President, HRAWI.

The association expressed its confidence that the measure will not only boost the hospitality sector but will also reinforce to position the state of Maharashtra as one of India's premier investment and tourism destinations.

"HRAWI commends the Maharashtra Government for this visionary reform. Allowing round-the-clock operations will create opportunities in terms of employment generation, and tourism inflows," said **Pradeep**



PRADEEP SHETTY
Spokesperson
HRAWI





A roadmap to hospitality's next chapter

With deliberations from Gen Z travellers to innovation, the FHRAI Convention outlined actionable steps to power tomorrow's hospitality and India's economy.

Building a future-ready hospitality: **HRANI**

“

The most inspiring takeaway was the shared sense of purpose.”



GARISH OBEROI

Hony. Treasurer
HRANI

The 55th Annual Convention of FHRAI, held from 18–20 September at Hotel Conrad, Bengaluru, was a landmark event for the Indian hospitality industry. Over three dynamic days, leaders, innovators, and policymakers came together to exchange ideas, build connections, and chart a roadmap for a future-ready sector.

The discussions spanned the full spectrum of hospitality. From strategies to strengthen Indian hospitality brands globally, to exploring growth potential in emerging cities and smaller markets, the panels provided actionable insights that will guide industry expansion in the years to come. Deliberations on redefining guest experiences, integrating technology thoughtfully, and

leveraging culinary creativity, underscored the importance of innovation while staying rooted in India's rich heritage.

Sustainability emerged as a central theme, with industry leaders emphasising the need for solutions that are both profitable and environmentally responsible. Conversations on smart technology, contactless services, and data security highlighted how the sector can embrace digital transformation

without compromising the personal touch that defines Indian hospitality. Equally compelling were discussions on creating meaningful, differentiated experiences — from gastronomy to personalised services — that resonate with today's mindful and discerning travellers.

Beyond knowledge sharing, the convention was a hub of networking and collaboration. Entrepreneurs, hoteliers, and policymakers engaged in candid dialogues, forging partnerships that will shape the trajectory of the industry.

Perhaps the most inspiring takeaway was the shared sense of purpose. The industry reflected on its strengths, challenges, and commitment to building a roadmap for 2047 — a vision that balances technology with human warmth and growth with sustainability. ▣

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Younger audiences seek spiritual tourism: HRAWI

“

Shift from ease of doing business to speed of doing business.”



JIMMY SHAW

President
HRAWI

The recently concluded 55th FHRAI Annual Convention in Bengaluru offered a vibrant, refreshing panorama of where Indian hospitality is headed. Over three days, industry leaders, policymakers, and visionaries converged to debate, deliberate, and drive insights that will shape the sector's path forward.

One of the most compelling themes was the influence of Gen Z travellers. Several speakers emphasised that younger travellers no longer settle for passive tourism; they seek deeper experiences, including wellness, spirituality, heritage, nature, and social purpose woven into their journeys. As highlighted in convention sessions, spiritual tourism is evolving beyond traditional demographics, with digital platforms reporting that 80 to 90 percent of searches for religious destinations now originate from younger audiences. For Indian hospitality, this is a clarion call — our offerings, branding, and service design must increasingly resonate with their values of authenticity, inclusivity, and eco-consciousness.

Another striking announcement came from the Andhra Pradesh State Government with its commitment to creating 2,00,000 jobs in tourism and hospitality, backed by ₹723 crore in approved hospitality projects. The AP Tourism Minister also declared a shift from ease of doing business to speed

of doing business with accelerated clearances, industry status for tourism projects, and hub-and-spoke circuits being deployed for regional connectivity and growth. These commitments reflect a model of proactive governance and public-private collaboration — one that other states must replicate.

In a competitive global landscape, states that streamline regulations, provide fiscal incentives, and respond swiftly to industry needs will see disproportionate gains in investment and job creation. Gen Z's expectations demand upskilling, sensitised training, and empathy-driven service. We must invest heavily in these areas. Similarly, wellness, heritage, spiritual, and rural tourism are no longer niches; they are pillars of future demand. Businesses that diversify into these verticals will outperform peers. Collaboration between the industry and the government is non-negotiable. Many bold plans at FHRAI's Convention hinged on policy support, regulatory agility, and financial frameworks. The industry must continue pushing constructive frameworks and holding institutions accountable.

As we in the fraternity digest these announcements, my appeal to all our members is to embolden vision, broaden horizons, and lean into innovation. ▣



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Gen Z to shape hospitality future: HRAEI

“

Gen Z prioritises eco-friendly properties and brands with social responsibility.”



SUDESH PODDAR
President
HRAEI

The 55th FHRAI Annual Convention highlighted the tourism and hospitality sector's power to influence the nation's economy. Built around the theme, “FutureScape 2047: Redefining Hospitality for a New India”, it intends to make the industry globally competitive as we move towards India@100. In the new paradigm, the focus will be on sustainable tourism, digital adoption, green infrastructure, and inclusive growth.

Bengaluru, India's innovation hub, provided the perfect setting to co-create a roadmap for a future-ready hospitality sector. Its world-class infrastructure, connectivity, and thriving hospitality culture made it the ideal host. Beyond logistics, Bengaluru offers cultural vibrancy and culinary diversity, reflecting the tastes of global travellers. The city itself is a case study in innovation and sustainability.

As one of the speakers in the convention stated, Bangalore is the microcosm of a city in which Gen Z will play a decisive role in shaping the future of hospitality. In the future city of 2047, employers need to adapt by building polished, skilled teams that can meet the evolving expectations of the new generation of travellers. Gen Z is already reshaping trends across spiritual, adventure, and wellness tourism.

Future hospitality trends driven by Gen Z emphasise seamless digital experiences, including mobile check-in and AI-powered services, alongside

personalisation and sustainability in travel. Gen Z also seeks authentic, culturally immersive experiences and is driving trends like workcations, while also prioritising affordability, often choosing hostels and locally owned options over traditional luxury hotels.

Gen Z prioritises eco-friendly properties and brands with social responsibility. They seek unique, immersive cultural experiences, rather than just luxury, often preferring locally owned rentals, hostels, and community-focused travel. They value connections with local businesses and desire genuine storytelling and community engagement from hospitality brands.

The rise of flexible work has led Gen Z to combine work with leisure, creating demand for work-friendly environments and co-working spaces within accommodations. While digitally savvy, Gen Z is price-conscious and often chooses budget-friendly options like hostels or hostels that offer high-quality service through sharing economy concepts.

To make the hospitality sector “future ready”, we must see the world from Gen Z's perspective — with a flexible attitude and not try to impose anything on the new generation travellers or guests. □



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		August 2025	July 2025	August 2024
	ARR	₹ 7,400 – 7,600	↑ 3 – 5%	↑ 6 – 8%
	Occupancy	58 – 60%	↓ 1 – 3 pp	↓ 0 – 2 pp
	RevPAR	₹ 4,292 – 4,560	<- Stable ->	↑ 5 – 7%

Change Over

Source: HVS ANAROCK Research; Data for Calendar Year
Cover Image Courtesy: Lemon Tree Resort, Kumbhalgarh

Bengaluru leads in ARR growth, occupancy slips

Driven by double-digit growth in key markets, ARR maintained strong y-o-y growth, even as occupancy saw a slight decline impacted by heavy monsoon.



DDP Bureau

According to the September 2025 report released by HVS Anarock, India's hotel sector in August was impacted by heavier-than-usual monsoon showers, which disrupted travel across several regions and led to a marginal dip in occupancy.

However, long weekends during the month boosted leisure travel, while corporate travel also showed signs of recovery, supported by conferences and business events in key markets.

ARR trends

ARRs sustained strong growth momentum, with several major markets posting double-digit increases over last year. Bengaluru emerged as the

Occupancy level declined marginally in several key markets due to heavier-than-usual monsoon conditions

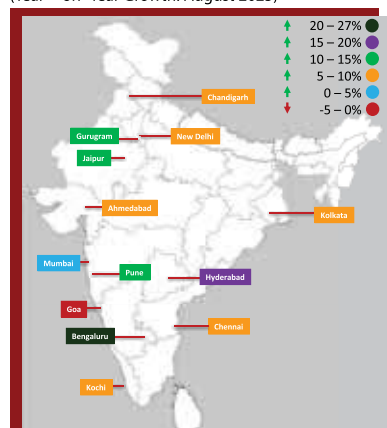
frontrunner, registering the sharpest year-on-year growth of 25-27 percent, supported by large conferences and events. Mumbai despite showing slowest growth, upheld its premium status, with ARR above ₹10,000. Goa remained an exception to the overall upward trend and recorded a decline in ARR.

Occupancy trends

Occupancy declined marginally in key markets due to heavier-than-usual monsoon that disrupted travel plans across several regions. Most key markets in South India, except Kochi, recorded a decline in occupancy, while those in the North, except Gurugram, experienced growth. □

ARR Trends Across Key Indian Markets

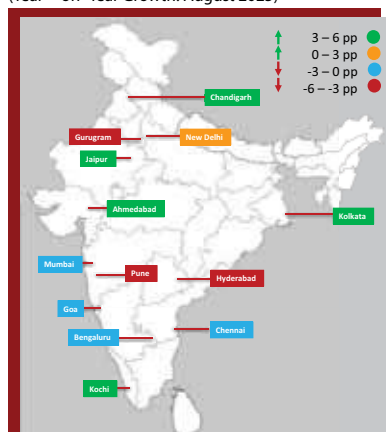
(Year -on -Year Growth: August 2025)



Source: HVS ANAROCK Research; Data for Calendar Year

Occupancy Trends Across Key Indian Markets

(Year -on -Year Growth: August 2025)



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

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Brand is belief

Panellists at the 55th FHRAI Annual Convention brainstormed on strategic priorities that can help place Indian hospitality brands on the global map.

 **Lipla Negi**

While Ayurveda has grown into a US\$ 9 billion business worldwide, India is yet to market its 5,000-year-old science to its fullest potential. Moderating the first panel discussion on Day 2 of the 55th FHRAI Annual Convention in Bengaluru, **Vikram Cotah**, CEO, GRT Hotels and Resorts, set the tone by spotlighting the urgent need to market “Brand India” more effectively. Cotah raised a sharp question, “Are we, as a nation, shy about branding ourselves or simply poor at marketing?”



The Brand is a Belief

Iconic Indian Hospitality Brands That Travel the World

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PANELISTS



During the discussion, the panellists were also joined by **V Vidyavathi**, Secretary Tourism, Government of India, who urged the industry to be co-creators of solutions. "How do we build India into a strong global brand in the tourism space? Beyond that, how do we create world-class destinations within the country? What does it take, what should our priorities be, and more importantly, how do we ensure effective implementation? What are the challenges we are likely to face, and how can we overcome them? These are some of the questions we continue to grapple with, and we look forward to your solutions, suggestions, and insights," she appealed.

Kick starting the deliberation with striking comparisons, Cotah said, "Lululemon sells yoga pants worth US\$ 60 billion. Globally, yoga has become a US\$ 115-billion economy. Yet, we cannot claim to have a single brand that truly represents our oldest



KB KACHRU
Chairman
South Asia, Raddison Hotel



ANIL CHADHA
Managing Director
ITC Hotels Ltd

"When we put in a global brand, it ensures a global traveller what to expect."

"You build it on predictability, promise, belief, and trust."



KAPIL CHOPRA

Founder & CEO, The Postcard Hotel and Founder, EazyDiner



AMRAPALI KATA

IAS, CEO, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority

and most precious tradition.” Despite India’s wealth of culture, heritage, and centuries-old traditions, Cotah pointed out the absence of an iconic Indian hospitality brand with global acclaim. “Thailand has Dusit Thani, Hong Kong has Shangri-La. But when we travel abroad, how many Indian hotel brands can we really stay at?” Cotah asked. He went

“The real challenge is making visitors stay longer and experience the rest of the state.”

on to challenge the industry with a thought-provoking query — why are not Indian brands being developed in the same way, and why are so many hotels content flying international flags?

Brands beyond logos

When asked to name that one defining belief that will shape Indian brands as they step onto the global stage by 2047, **KB Kachru**, Chairman, South Asia, Raddison Hotel, said, “What really is significant is the trust, promise, and consistency. It is ultimately a question of strategy and priorities. India is a vast market, and the exponential expansion of tier II and III cities post-COVID has changed the market dynamics. With rising disposable incomes, people are willing to spend more. Post-COVID, the domestic market not only grew quickly but also aligned with the government’s push for citizens to explore their own country.”

Praising Hilton’s recent ad campaign, which earned 5.8 billion





Turning the tables, Chadha highlighted that India tops every international chain's growth plan. "It is not about placing a flag somewhere to satisfy egos; it is about developing our own country, tourism, culture, and hospitality. We must continue on this path," he said.

Echoing the sentiment, Kachru added, "India is a huge outbound market — 12 million inbound versus 30 million outbound — and we must take advantage of that."

Both leaders underscored that India's tourism depth and diversity are unmatched, now reinforced by world-class infrastructure. "We are building 45 km of roads every day, the number of airports has doubled, and we are competing in the MICE category with international-level venues like Yashobhumi and Bharat Mandapam. It is time to bring the world to India", Chadha emphasised.

Build in India for the world

Tracing back the inception of Postcard Hotels, **Kapil Chopra**, Founder and CEO, The Postcard Hotel and Founder, EazyDiner, explained, "We take a very simple binary decision while building a Postcard Hotel — either it could be insanely great or it cannot be a Postcard hotel. When a customer comes to us they already

views, he opined that global brands instill confidence in travellers. He explained, "When we put in a global brand, it ensures a worldwide traveller what to expect and what not to expect." According to him, global brands have a larger loyalty base, which brings a lot of traction for their Indian partners. "When we deliver on expectations, the brand is not only consolidated but also elevated to a position of superiority," he said.

US Green Building Council recognises us for operational excellence," he shared.

Underscoring that hospitality is ultimately a business of indulgence, Chadha posed a key question, "How do you make indulgence guilt-free?" He pointed out that 54 percent of ITC's energy is renewable, reinforcing the brand's commitment to sustainable luxury. "You need to continue to carry this forward."

It's your story

Excited to return to the FHRAI Convention stage after many years, **Anil Chadha**, Managing Director, ITC Hotels, emphasised the importance of taking the brand story to the market. "You build it on predictability, promise, belief, and trust. You need to understand which segment you are pitching your brand to, and the entire culture of the organisation should live the brand," he said.

Chadha recalled how the phrase "responsible luxury" was coined and has since become synonymous with ITC Hotels. With younger generations prioritising sustainability, ITC's brand story, he noted, resonates deeply with them. "Today, we are the largest chain in the world where all hotels are LEED Platinum certified. Twelve are LEED Zero Carbon and nine are LEED Zero Water. The



know that they have thought it through, and that then becomes a brand promise.”

While building uber-luxury remains the core focus, a multi-brand strategy is off the table for the brand. Chopra explained that as markets evolve, success depends on refining offerings rather than multiplying them. “When a country becomes more affluent, consumers grow more discretionary. You need to apply that discretion to what you are offering,” he said.

When asked whether Postcard Hotels is open to franchising, the response was clear — not franchising but managing. “We like to get involved in the building process”, he said. The brand currently operates 11 hotels, with eight more set to open in the next 12 months — from Chitwan to Jawai to Kanah — aiming to develop a complete wildlife circuit out of India. He emphasised that creating truly great hotels requires world-class design. “Why is Jean-Michel Gathy, who just opened the Aman Nai Lert in Bangkok, not building in India? You need to call him. We have got Luca Franco of Luxury Frontiers

“When you bring in great architects, they create destinations that become attractions in themselves.”

building here, and Richard Parr also working in India. When you bring in great architects, they create destinations that become attractions in themselves.”

Partnering for storytelling

Sharing a bureaucratic perspective on state branding, **Amrapali Kata**, IAS, CEO, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority, emphasised the importance of consistency in communication. “The reason we all remember Kerala’s tagline is consistency, and that is usually where states fall short in terms of branding,” she noted.

To address this, she suggested that states should collaborate with strong hospitality brands to elevate their own image and destinations.

“Our approach in the past year has been to onboard as many hospitality brands as possible and bring in large-scale investment. When Postcard goes to a destination, it puts that place on the global map. When Oberoi builds a hotel, suddenly that destination gets noticed,” she explained.

Using Tirupati as an example, Kata pointed out that despite being a major religious tourism hub, Andhra Pradesh has struggled to extend visitor stays. “People go to see the deity and leave the same day, often within hours. That is a bottleneck for us. The real challenge is making visitors stay longer and experience the rest of the state,” she said.

Wrapping the session, the panellists echoed in unison that while Indian brands will eventually venture abroad, the immediate priority is to strengthen the domestic hospitality sector. “Indian brands will certainly go global — not just like Postcard, but also through wealthy Indians creating brands overseas. For now, though, the focus should remain on building within India,” Chopra noted. ■



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Lipla Negi

Despite being home to some of the world's most spectacular natural and cultural assets, India ranks only 39th in global tourism competitiveness. This contrast is striking for a nation that is already the world's fourth-largest economy and is soon expected to become the third.

Focusing on ways to elevate India's position on the global tourism index, a panel discussion on

"India@2047 – Shaping India's Trillion-Dollar Experience Economy" brought together key voices from hospitality and tourism. The session featured **Zubin Saxena**, SVP and Regional Head, South Asia, Hilton; **Dr Rajendra**, Director, Tourism, Government of Karnataka; **Nikhil Sharma**, MD and COO, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group; **Vaibhav Jatia**, MD and CEO, Rhythm Hospitality; and **Dr Bhupesh Kumar**, Principal, IHM Ranchi, and Member Secretary, IHMCT&AN (Jharkhand) Society. Moderated by **Aashish**

Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH, the discussion explored how India can harness its potential to build a trillion-dollar experiential economy.

Feel India like never before

Calling tourism a "marathon, not a sprint", Dr Rajendra opined that India must accelerate strategically to capture global attention. "India's strength in domestic tourism is undeniable but what is needed now is a decisive shift towards experiential travel." He underlined the need for iconic ideas to create experiential



Public-private collaboration is the very essence of India's experience economy

not see the kind of human touch that defines Indian hospitality."

Underlining the "aspirational" and "experiential" quotient of hotels, he observed that hoteliers often tend to associate experiential stays only with luxury. He explained, "But that is not true. You can deliver luxury, memorable experiences even at mid-scale or budget hotels."

Talking about the rising demand for "experiential stays", Sharma added, "Brands used to aim for 50 or 100 hotels. Today, they are talking about 300 to 500 properties. That was unheard of in India. But the demand exists, especially in tier II, tier III, and tier IV cities. And it spans the full spectrum — not just luxury, not just midscale, but also budget and upscale properties."

Public-private partnership

Recounting the not-so-distant past, Saxena noted that even ten years ago, hotel ownership and hospitality investments were seen differently. He said, "We have come a long way — from being viewed as an indulgence to now being recognised as one of the pillars of the economy. What is even more encouraging is the gov-

centres that become landmarks in themselves. Taking the example of Karnataka, which has more than 20,000 heritage monuments, 800 officially notified sites, and four UNESCO World Heritage sites, he said, "If people only stay without engaging, we lose an opportunity." Acknowledging the positive change within government to achieve the trillion-dollar economy goal, he said, "The focus is now on converting our

assets into experiences. People should not just visit India — they should feel India."

Responding to the question on experiential hospitality, Sharma shared, "It is important to note that hospitality in Asia, and particularly in South-east Asia, is truly unique. One does not find this level of warmth and personalisation elsewhere. Even in the most prosperous cities, despite the abundance of money, one does



ZUBIN SAXENA
SVP & Regional Head
South Asia, Hilton



DR RAJENDRA
Director, Tourism,
Government of Karnataka



NIKHIL SHARMA
MD & COO, South Asia,
Radisson Hotel Group



VAIBHAV JATIA

MD & CEO
Rhythm Hospitality



DR BHUPESH KUMAR

Principal, IHM Ranchi, and
Member Secretary, IHMCT&AN
(Jharkhand) Society



AASHISH GUPTA

Consulting CEO
FAITH

ernment's open-minded approach towards growing this sector. All of us who have interacted with bureaucrats or attended industry meetings can sense that there is a very positive and receptive attitude now."

"From the visa-on-arrival process to the check-in at the hotel, every touchpoint needs to feel connected. The experience of India must flow effortlessly from one step to another. And that can only happen when the two sectors — public and private work in harmony." He further added that public-private partnership will define India's journey to becoming a trillion-dollar experience economy by 2047."

Citing the *Kumbh Mela* at Prayagraj as a shining example of what an effective public-private partnership can accomplish, Jatia said, "The

AI is rapidly transforming guest experiences

digital and physical infrastructure created there gives me great hope. It demonstrated what India can achieve when its natural resources, spiritual heritage, and digital expertise come together in harmony."

AI vs humans

The discussion then steered towards the crucial topic of manpower. Sharing his experience, Kumar said, "If I look back or whenever I talk to my old batchmates, I often wonder — how many of us are still in the industry, serving after completing

courses related to hospitality or tourism? Hardly five out of a hundred. So where are the remaining ninety-five?" He pointed out that a critical gap has persisted since the early 1980s, when the framework for developing skilled manpower in the hospitality, and later the tourism sector, was first introduced.

As the conversation turned to AI, automation, and technology shaping the industry today, Sharma said, "We must ensure that we do not lose this essence. The personal, human-driven service that makes our region special must be preserved and leveraged to its fullest potential."

While the panellists agreed that AI is rapidly transforming guest experiences, whether it can ever replace the human touch in hospitality remains to be seen. ❑





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Unboxing India's tier II & III hospitality potential

As India's hospitality landscape evolves, tier II and III cities are fast emerging as strategic growth corridors, unlocking new opportunities for hotel brands.



The panel discussion, "Bharat Unboxed: Cracking the Tier II & III Code for Hospitality Expansion," on Day 2 of the event brought together industry leaders to explore market trends, operational challenges, and innovative strategies to capture the untapped potential of India's smaller cities. Moderated by **Nikhil Sharma**, Managing Director and COO, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, the session featured insights from **Samir MC**, CEO, Tamara Leisure Experiences; **Vikram Lalvani**, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Sterling Holiday Resorts; **Souvagya Mohapatra**, Managing Director (India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka), Atmosphere Core, and **Gaurav Malik**, Country Director, Indian Subcontinent & Indian Ocean Islands, Agoda.

Holy events drive numbers

Malik highlighted the direct correlation between events and travel demand. He explained that concerts can multiply searches for the host city on Agoda by four to five times. "It is probably the single biggest way to drive demand for travel that we are seeing in India right now," he revealed.

However, he stressed that religious and pilgrimage tourism is another significant growth engine for the industry. Malik noted that searches for pilgrimage destinations have grown almost 25 percent year-on-year. "If I look at that trend for any quarter, any month since the *Mahakumbh Mela*, we see that trend is continuing, which means there is no slowdown in sight, and I think it will continue into Q4 and well into next year as well."

Sustainability ethos

When asked about the Tamara Col-



NIKHIL SHARMA

Managing Director and COO,
South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

lective concept, Samir described how the brand is integrating sustainability and community engagement. He outlined the responsible practices of Tamara's three brands — luxury Tamara, upscale O by Tamara, and mid-scale Lilac. Further, he shared details of their new houseboat resort in Alleppey, which would reimag-



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What sets the Atmosphere Core apart is its F&B offerings, space management, and architecture that respects local culture and materials

ine the sustainable take on the entire houseboat experience in Kerala. "At Tamara Marine Alleppey, we will have EV-powered boats and not use diesel, which will make a big impact," he said. He explained further, saying, "In every property, we try to work with the local community, partner with artisans, and bring a large chunk of our supplies through local procurement."

Luxury differentiation

Mohapatra elaborated that Atmosphere Core has aggressive expansion plans in India, under which Bengaluru will serve as the company's hub for the next decade. He revealed that out of 25 luxury properties planned under the "25 by 25" initiative, 21 have already been signed in India, with additional properties in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives.

On differentiation, Mohapatra said, "We are different in many



SAMIR MC

Chief Executive Officer,
Tamara Leisure Experiences

ways, which include F&B offerings, space management, wellness facilities beyond spa for all ages, and architecture that respects local culture and materials. Each of our 22 hotels is unique."

Rise of tier II & III markets

Tier II and III cities have long been viable for hospitality. Lalvani noted that these markets offer higher returns on capital and lower risks than metro cities. "If one needs to grow, one needs to grow into tier II & III markets. There is no choice."

Addressing operational challenges in smaller cities, he highlighted the importance of networking destinations, sourcing skilled manpower locally, and undertaking destination marketing to build awareness and attract guests. Malik took the con-



VIKRAM LALVANI

Managing Director and
Chief Executive Officer,
Sterling Holiday Resorts

versation further, saying that tier II and III cities are seeing twice the search demand compared to their tier I counterparts.

Tech integration

On digital initiatives, Malik explained, "We support almost 100 payment methods. We are also leaning heavily into AI, with tools like the Ask Me Anything bot and AI-powered itinerary planning. Agoda is working toward seamless multi-destination bookings and faster connectivity options, aiming to become the most local global OTA."

With tech innovation transforming the hospitality industry, Samir reflected on his first 100 days at Tamara. He highlighted the company's tech-driven operations, noting, "I have only signed four papers in the last 93 days. Everything is digitised in our company."

Customer-centric hospitality

Lalvani stressed the complexity of leisure hospitality, where the focus is on family experiences. "In a business hotel, you are dealing with one person. In leisure, you are dealing with a minimum of three, possibly four living beings, which includes a pet sometimes. The experiences must satisfy all four," he said.

He cautioned that while digitisation and AI improve backend efficiency, they cannot replace the importance of personal interaction, which remains the crux of leisure hospitality. □



SOUVAGYA MOHAPATRA

Managing Director
(India, Nepal, Bhutan, & Sri Lanka)
Atmosphere Core



GAURAV MALIK

Country Director
Indian Subcontinent &
Indian Ocean Islands, Agoda

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Carving a new path to innovation

Pioneering new paradigms in hospitality, the FHRAI Convention created a vibrant ecosystem to showcase new products and forge long-term partnerships.



SINGARAM (ARVIND) SUNDAR

CEO, StejasSYS



“ The convention was an eye-opener. It provided amazing opportunities, enabling us to meet decision makers, owners, and professionals from all over India. It opened doors wide for us to connect with potential clients and understand their challenges. This empowers us to make the products even better and efficient and make life easier for them.

We offer a range of products that can make hotels or food and beverage (F&B) operations more effective. In terms of tech innovation, we provide useful, purposeful technology that can be deployed with minimal friction, significantly enhancing hotel operations and guest experience. We also build AI-based products that are designed to transform the guest experience. For example, one of our products is a concierge service agent that offers 24/7 services to our guests. Equipped with sentiment analysis and data tracking tools, these products help hoteliers to make more informed business decisions and improve operational workflows.

For F&B management, our tech solutions handle the entire process from inventory procurement and kitchen operations to end-users' delivery and point-of-sale (POS) transactions. We maintain the entire data flow through our system, which helps us identify gaps where food wastage occurs.

After three months of implementing our systems, you can expect a 20 percent reduction in food waste, which is substantial for hotels, restaurant chains, and industrial kitchens. Another important aspect of our system is demand forecasting. We analyse various parameters to provide real-time insights into anticipated demand. For instance, instead of preparing 100 lunches, our system may suggest preparing only 70, which helps to reduce both costs and waste. ”

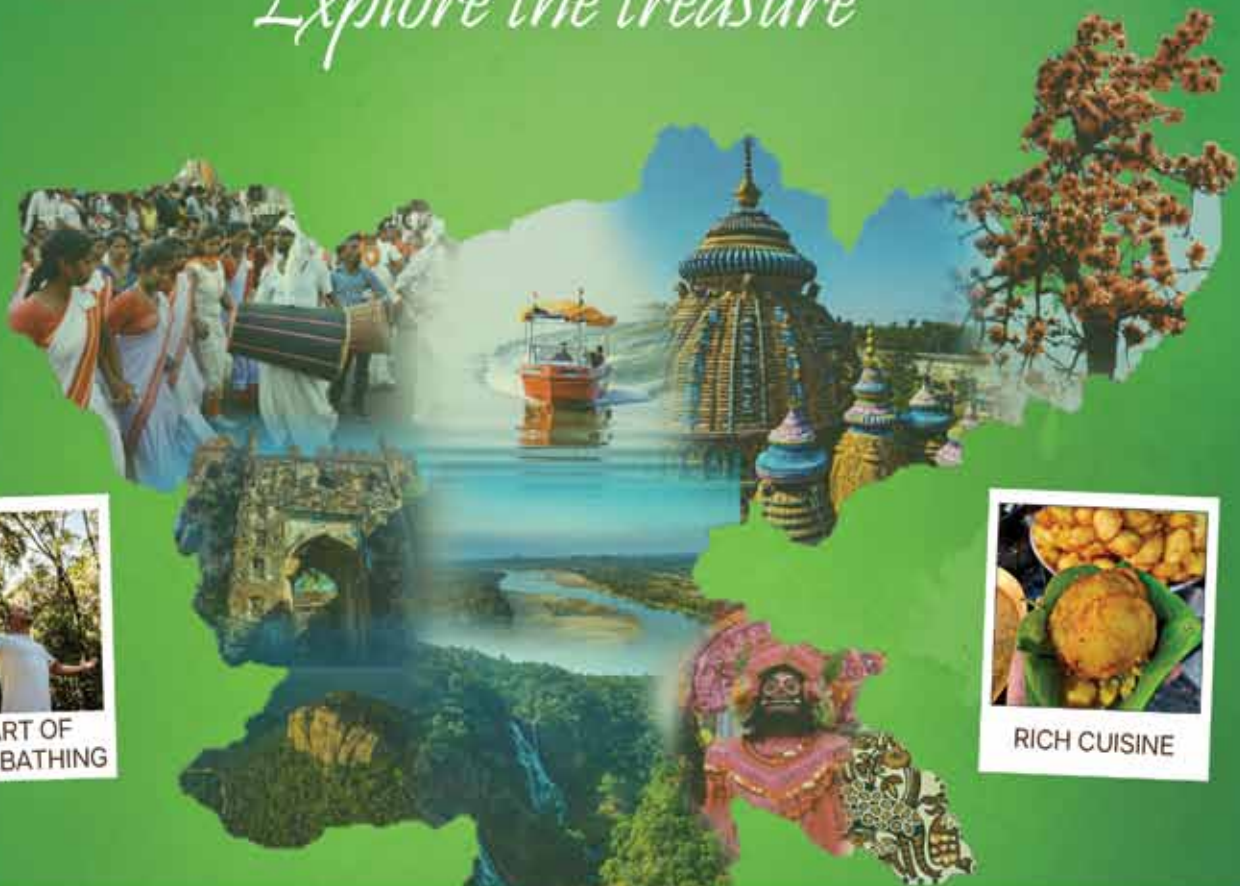




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ANKITH SENGAR

Vice President, D2C and Digital, Zephyr

“ FHRAI is one of the few platforms where decision-makers actually show up. At FHRAI, we get to cut through layers to speak directly to the people who can make a change today. Talking about guest experience in 2025, it is beyond a pretty lobby or a faster check-in app, it is about seamless operations behind the scenes — where everything works smoothly that the guests never see the mess. That is where Zephyr comes in.

Our product suite, including wash stations, pressure wash systems, and steam cleaning solutions, offers smart and sustainable solutions. They last five times longer than traditional products. They are sturdier and lighter, enabling staff work faster and reduce water wastage by up to 30 percent per station. What does that mean for hoteliers — achieving faster cleaning, lower maintenance, sustainability and a hotel team that looks efficient, not exhausted. In other words, Zephyr helps hotels keep costs down, keep operations green, and keep guests happy.”

DEEPAK SHETTY

Chief Revenue Officer, Radiowalla Network



“ The opportunity to engage with leading hoteliers and decision-makers was unmatched. Normally, it takes three to six months of follow-ups just to meet such people at their properties, but here, under one umbrella, they were all accessible. Being able to see them, meet them, network with them, share meals, and even laugh together created a real sense of connection. This bond between industry leaders and service providers is invaluable and will go a long way in helping us. Events like this, for me and for any service provider, are powerful platforms to build relationships and boost business.

Our product offers a real solution to a pressing problem. Many hoteliers and resorts today struggle with music licensing — they are unsure about the different licenses required in India, as the government has not provided clear guidelines. We bring clarity and a solution to this challenge. Beyond licensing, there is also the science of luxury music — a concept not widely understood. For example, what happens if spa music is played in a gym or gym music in a spa? The impact is very different, and that is where our expertise steps in. Whether it is a budget, mid-range, or luxury property, every hotel aspires to deliver the best possible guest experience. Our solution helps them achieve exactly that.”



RAJESH CHOWDHURY

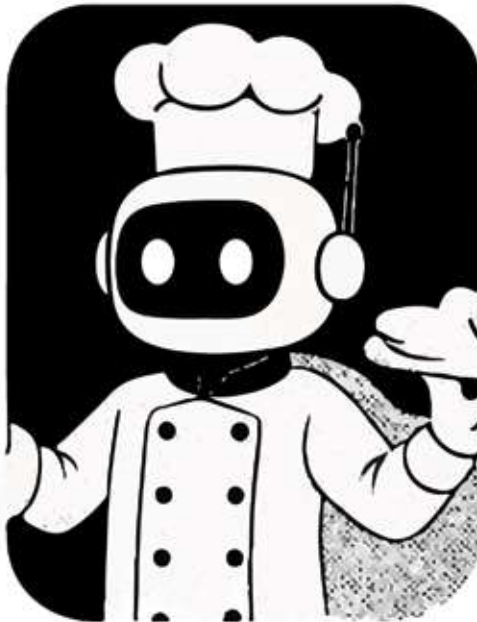
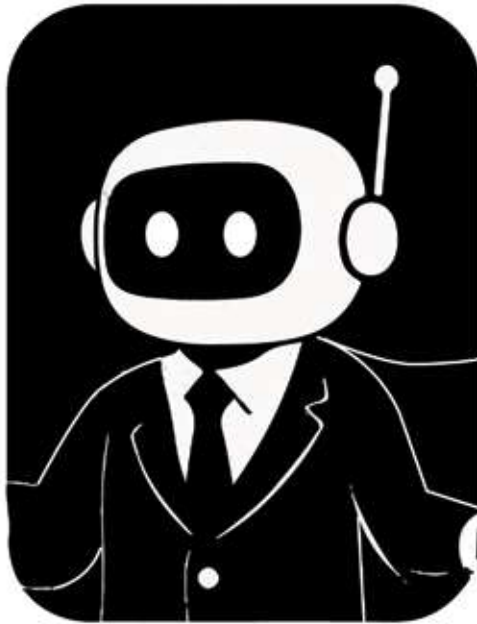
Founder & Director, FSCAI (Food Service Consultants Association of India)

“ Food Service Consultants Association of India was started in 2021. Our objective is to bring food service consultants together and create a robust platform for knowledge sharing. With this collective expertise, we want to disseminate knowledge about industry best practices and also create awareness about the importance of regulations in the industry. The absence of regulation creates various challenges, from allowing many fabricators and consultants enter the market without formal training to unsafe kitchen designs and unhygienic practices. Therefore, it is our duty to sensitise and bring about some regulations. We want the government to establish a grading system for consultants based on experience and expertise. If this is put in place, it would reduce unethical practices in the industry. For example, a consultant with limited experience grabs project from a senior consultant with a lower bid. We have taken the initiative to clean up the system. Our next step is engaging with the government officials and ministries to push forward for regulations to foster safer practices and fairer competition.”

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SANDEEP RHODE

Head Marketing & Sales, ARGIL SPC Flooring Co.

“Based in Morbi, Gujarat, we specialise in manufacturing SPC flooring in Morbi, Gujarat. Our group, established 70 years ago, is now led by the third generation. We primarily target the hospitality industry. Our products are designed to solve various issues related to wooden flooring. They are waterproof and termite resistant, making them ideal for hotels. Besides, our flooring solution saves time with quick installation, which can be done in a single day without disturbing guests staying below. In short, our solution is beneficial for the hotel industry

We are seeing a booming market in tier II and III with improved infrastructure. We see a tremendous change in rail, road, and air travel, which boost the tourism sector. As a result, we anticipate a growth in hotels in these markets, which will be our key targets. Lastly, the FHRAI Convention was a good platform for hotel owners to directly see our products, helping to increase our business and strengthen our brand.”

**SANJAY JHA**

Manager, Institutions & Corporate Sales, Peps India

“I have been associated with Peps India for the last decade. The 55th annual convention of FHRAI was a good platform for us where we directly interacted with many clients from the hospitality industry and beyond. There were many clients who like our products, giving them the real comfort of luxury mattresses. Our mattresses are designed to deliver quality sleep, which is essential for human well-being. Since people spend nearly one-third of their lives in bed, our products aim to rejuvenate and energise users, enhancing their work productivity and overall lifestyle.

Today, customers look for innovative, engineered products that give an extra luxurious feel. Therefore, we do not restrict ourselves only to product quality but also to sales service. This is crucial to building a good relationship and retaining our clients.”

**RAJESH SHARMA**

CEO, Kalatmak Spatial Systems

“This was our first event with FHRAI, which was a great experience meeting many industry people directly. We gained deeper insights into the tourism segment and helped us to stay abreast with latest trends. We specialise in manufacturing furniture for retail, residential, and hospitality spaces. The general trend now is the concept of light and open furniture with lesser drawers and shutters, moving away from closed wardrobes. More brighter colours are preferred, along with lighter colours.

As renovation projects are on rise, there is a great potential for factory-made furniture and an onsite execution team. But currently many projects are assigned to end-to-end service providers, such as turnkey solution providers or general contractors. A more efficient model would be combining factory-made furniture combined with dedicated on-site teams, which could significantly save project timelines.”



ITW opens HQ in Gurgaon, eyes expansion in Mumbai

In a move to broaden its market reach, ITW India has inaugurated its new Gurgaon headquarters, with further plans to spread its footprint in Mumbai.



DDP Bureau

ITW India (FEG Division) has inaugurated a new office in Gurgaon, which will serve as the company's headquarters in the country. The new facility features a state-of-the-art experience centre, purpose-built for live cooking demonstrations, warewashing systems, and food preparation innovations — underscoring the brand's ongoing commitment to excellence and innovation in the industry.



RAZI HAIDER

Country Manager, ITW India
(FEG Division)

“The new Gurgaon facility is designed not just for administrative operations but also as an interactive experience centre.”



Speaking about the growth of the company, **Razi Haider**, Country Manager, ITW India (FEG Division), said, “As the team has grown now, we have opened a new spacious office here in Capital Business Park, Tower II, Gurgaon. The new facility is designed not just for administrative operations but also as an interactive experience centre.”

Expansion strategies

ITW India continues to strengthen its presence in South India, witnessing rising demand across Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad. “We currently have an office in Bengaluru and will soon be relocating to a larger facility nearby by 2026,” he shared, adding that the company's sustained

efforts are driving promising growth across key southern markets.

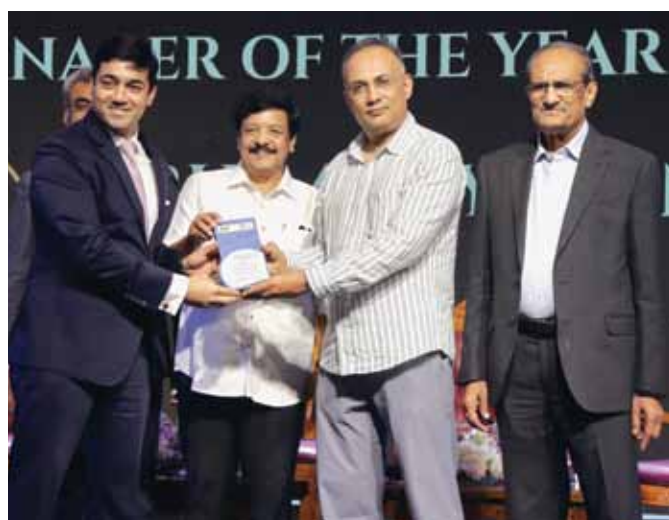
He further revealed, “Soon, we will be opening an office in Mumbai in 2027 to serve the Western India region.”

AI-powered products

On the innovation front, ITW recently launched its FLOW Line flight-type dishwashing machine, featuring AI-based technology for improved efficiency and automation. The product will be showcased at the upcoming Milan Show. “Our customers increasingly seek AI-driven solutions, and we have already incorporated these technologies in both our dishwashing and cooking equipment,” he stated. □

The benchmark of brilliance

The most sought-after awards of the year, the FHRAI Awards reflect its constant endeavour to nurture and recognise the best talent in the hospitality industry.





FHRAI Award Winners List 2025

Individual Entrepreneur Awards

- 1 **Young Hotelier of the Year**
Adil Divakar
Operation Manager The Renai , Cochin
- 2 **Young Hotelier of the Year**
Shivash Chagti
Managing Director, Hotel Green Castle, Delhi
- 3 **Restaurant Entrepreneur of the Year**
Namit Gulati
Director, Gulati Restaurant, Delhi

Individual Manager Awards

- 4 **Hotel General Manager/Hotel Manager of the Year -Luxury**
Abhimanyu Singh Lodha
General Manager, The Lodhi, New Delhi
- 5 **Hotel General Manager / Hotel Manager of the Year - Upscale**
Deep Preet Singh Bindra
General Manager
The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace, Hyderabad
- 6 **Hotel General Manager / Hotel Manager of the Year - Upscale**
Vivek Sharma
General Manager,
Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield, Bengaluru
- 7 **Hotel General Manager/Hotel Manager of the Year- Midscale**
Anand Singh
General Manager, Black Mango Resort,Sirmaur
Hotels Pvt. Ltd, Himachal Pradesh
- 8 **Hotel General Manager/Hotel Manager of the Year-Economy**
Venkatesan R
General Manager
Zibe Salem By GRT Hotels, Salem
- 9 **Hotel F & B Manager of the Year - Luxury**
Sudip Kanjilal
Director - F & B The Park Indore, Indore
- 10 **Hotel F & B of the Year - Midscale**
S. Imran Khan
EAM - Food & Beverage Accord, Puducherry
- 11 **Hotel Marketing Manager of the Year**
Snehadipta Pyne
Marketing & Communications Manager, Grand
Mercure Bangalore
- 12 **Hotel HR Manager of the Year**
Kartik Sahoo
Director of People & Culture, Radisson Blu
Guwahati

- 13 **Restaurant Manager of the Year - Hotel Restaurant**
Nandha Gopan GK
Assistant Restaurant Manager, WHARF, Radisson
Blu Templebay Mamallapuram
- 14 **Hotel Sales Manager of the Year**
Rahul Jadhav
Director of Sales and Marketing, Grand Mercure
Bangalore, Koramangala
- 15 **Chef of the Year - Luxury**
Santosh Kumar Yadav
Executive Chef, The Park, Indore
- 16 **Hotel Housekeeper of the Year Luxury**
Kapildev G
Executive Housekeeper, Radisson Blu Bengaluru
- 17 **Hotel Housekeeper of the Year -Upscale**
Victor Francis Rage
Executive Housekeeper, Four Points by Sheraton,
Navi Mumbai
- 18 **Hotel Housekeeper of the Year - Economy**
T.R. Vadivel
Manager - Housekeeping, Regency Madurai By
GRT Hotels
- 19 **Security Manager of the Year**
Hitesh Patel
Security Manager, Radisson Blu Hotel, Ahmedabad
- 20 **Hotel Front Office of the Year - Midscale**
Prabhu Shanmugam
Front Office Manager, GReaT Trails Kodaikanal
By GRT Hotels
- 21 **Best Hospitality Journalist of the Year**
Ms. Lipla Negi
Associate Editor, DDP Publications
- 22 **Special Jury Award**
Mr. Somnath Mukherjee
Executive Vice- President – Operations IHCL

Institutional Awards

- 23 Best Hospitality Institute of the Year
Institute of Hotel Management Catering Technology
and Applied Nutrition, Kolkata.
- 24 V. M. Salgaocar Institute of International
Hospitality Education, Goa
- 25 Green Hotel of the Year - Upscale
The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake & Marriott
Executive Apartments, Mumbai
- 26 Green Hotel of the Year - Midmarket
Four Points by Sheraton, Vashi, Mumbai
- 27 Best Wellness Resort of the Year
Atmantan Wellness Centre, Pune 

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◀ Timeless luxury

The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences has presented Signatures by The Leela, a bespoke collection of festive hampers designed to embody the season's spirit of grandeur. Every hamper is more than a curated assortment — it is a story of taste, texture, and celebration. It also offers the option of customising hampers to suit individual preferences, corporate requirements, or special occasions.

Versatile gourmet delights ▶

Curated Diwali hampers by Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity are thoughtfully designed to bring together the spirit of tradition and the elegance of modern indulgence. The collection features various gourmet delights, including assorted baklava, artisanal Indian chocolates, and macaroons, among others. Guests can mix, match, and customise their hampers that reflect their unique style and sentiments.



◀ Tradition weds luxury

Radisson Blu MBD Hotel Noida has unveiled an extensive range of handcrafted Diwali hampers that blend tradition, indulgence, and elegance. Filled with gourmet delights, artisanal treats, and keepsakes, these hampers are crafted to convey warmth and appreciation, whether you are celebrating with family, cherishing friendships, or extending gratitude through meaningful corporate gifting.



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Rahul Joshi
General Manager
Shangri-La Bengaluru

Rahul Joshi has been appointed as the new General Manager of Shangri-La Bengaluru. With a career spanning over 25 years, he brings substantial expertise gleaned from leadership roles at five-star properties across India and abroad. His strengths lie in strategic innovation, mentoring talent, and cultivating partnerships.



Manoj Kumar
General Manager, WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa

WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort & Spa has announced the appointment of Manoj Kumar as its General Manager. With over 14 years of leadership in India's premier hospitality sector, Kumar has a wealth of experience in elevating guest experiences, enhancing operational excellence, and driving sustainable growth.



Pradipta K Mohapatra
Vice President – Development & Liaison, Atmosphere Core

Atmosphere Core has promoted Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra to the position of Vice President – Development & Liaison for its operations across South Asia. In this new role, Mohapatra will work closely with the leadership team to drive the company's ambitious goal of signing 25 hotels in India by this year end.



Reshma Godbole
Director, Sales & Marketing, Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar

Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa has appointed Reshma Godbole as the Director of Sales & Marketing. With over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Reshma brings a strong track record of driving sales strategies, building market presence, and delivering business growth for leading luxury hotel brands.



Soumyadeep Bhattacharya
Director, Operations, InterContinental Jaipur Tonk Road

InterContinental Jaipur Tonk Road has appointed Soumyadeep Bhattacharya as its Director of Operations. With over 17 years of experience, his last stint was with Holiday Inn Bengaluru Racecourse. He has been part of IHG's prestigious Journey to GM programme and has played a vital role in opening restaurants.



Prashant Kumar
Assistant Finance Controller, Courtyard by Marriott Ranchi

Courtyard by Marriott Ranchi has appointed Prashant Kumar as its Assistant Finance Controller. With extensive experience from renowned international brands, such as Marriott International, Ramada, and Hyatt Hotels, he will focus on enhancing financial efficiency and mentoring his team to achieve operational excellence.

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