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# fhrai magazine

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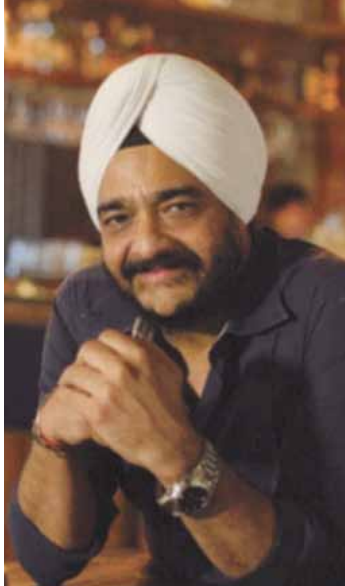
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**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President  
FHRAI

**FHRAI and  
FHRAI-IHM  
teams worked  
round the  
clock to get the  
institute ready  
for inspection  
with full support  
from its regions**

*Dear fellow members,*

**I**wish all of you a very happy Diwali. While we crawl back to normalcy, the festival of lights brings a ray of hope and good news. I am pleased to inform you that your Institute, FHRAI-IHM, Greater Noida, will begin physical classes for the first batch of B.Sc. in H&HA on November 8, 2021. The FHRAI-IHM, Greater Noida, has announced the launch of a scholarship programme for students interested in pursuing a three-year B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration at the FHRAI-IHM. The FHRAI-IHM is proud to be the first and only private institution run by an industry association to be affiliated with the NCHMCT.

Children of employees of FHRAI member establishments and regional associations, who meet the NCHMCT admission criteria will be eligible for a 50 per cent waiver in admission, enrolment, tuition, and examination fees. Children from the families of hospitality patrons or employees will receive a 20 per cent waiver. The scholarship will be provided in solidarity and as a special case to the children of member establishments' hospitality sector employees who lost their jobs during the pandemic, based on certification from the member establishment and regional associations. Associations will shortlist the eligible candidates in their region and recommend them for enrollment in FHRAI-IHM.

FHRAI-IHM is located in Greater Noida's Knowledge City on a large 7-acre campus with state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure. On the campus, there is a well-equipped 70-bed hostel for girls and a 200-bed hostel for boys. Under the leadership of Arun Kumar Singh, former Principal of IHM Mumbai, the institute boasts a devoted and experienced faculty. FHRAI-IHM also assures students a placement after they complete the three-year education programme.

The tourism and hospitality sector in India has the potential to become the economy's growth

engine by accelerating demand and supply while also generating millions of jobs. In the present environment, all stakeholders must join hands to ensure that the hospitality industry's growth prospects are not hamstrung by current challenges. FHRAI and its regional associations will take the lead in promoting hospitality education in the country, picking up where we left off prior to the pandemic, with the launch of the scholarship scheme.

Unfortunately, the institute was recently dismissed as beyond repair and resurrection, thereby bearing the brunt of years of neglect and a dismissal attitude that led to its near-closure. After a gap of disruptions due to COVID, our present team at FHRAI set out to resurrect the institute's full operation.

Our goal was to resurrect the image and vision that our founder fathers had when they established the Institute in a beautiful and vast 7-acre campus in Greater Noida. The team at FHRAI & FHRAI-IHM worked around the clock to get the institute ready for inspection with full support from our regions.

The institute's office bearers, staff and team FHRAI-IHM have a vision to make it a milestone in the field of hospitality education. We reach out to our members to extend your your blessings and support and send your candidates to your institute. Please contact the FHRAI secretariat or the FHRAI-IHM directly at <https://www.fhrai-ihm.com/> for more information.

Looking forward to your support.

Wish you a safe, prosperous, and busy year ahead!

*With kind regards,*  
*Gurbaxish Singh Kohli*  
Vice President, FHRAI

# NOVEMBER 2021

## POWER TARIFF WOES

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Regional Presidents urge the central and state governments to grant the hospitality sector 'industry status' and supply electricity to the sector at industrial rates.

COVER IMAGE:

SIX SENSES FORT BARWARA, RAJASTHAN



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The scholarship programme for students interested in pursuing B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration has the great promise to become a game changer for the economy



## SKILLS FOR FUTURE LEADERS POST-COVID 24

The industry will eventually return to its former grandeur, opines Ashima Chat-terjee Misra, Assistant Lecturer, Rooms Division & Business Communication, FHRAI-IFM.



## BRIGHTER FUTURE 26

There has been a declining trend in bookings since COVID and pricing is more competitive than ever. How the industry leaders respond to such uncertainty is a million-dollar question.

## FESTIVE BOOST FOR HOSPITALITY 32

The hospitality industry is expected to see exponential occupancy from festive bookings by the fourth quarter of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022..



### FHRAI

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# Reviving the hospitality sector

FHRAI has urged the state govt to take facilitative measures.

**F**HRAI has praised the Government of Arunachal Pradesh's unparalleled resilience in managing the challenges posed by the pandemic and taking proactive measures to combat it. The Association has, thus, asked the state government to take the following steps to help the tourist and hospitality sector recover:

- Revival of the MICE segment will provide the sector a great impetus. Therefore, special attention should be paid to its survival while implementing any restrictions in the future.
- Since the wedding season is about to begin,



**The inoculation drive is picking pace all across the country**

the state's restrictions on gatherings should be lifted in order to create an environment of certainty.

- Allow the hospitality establishments to function as per the allotted timings.
- The state government has been urged to introduce an incentive scheme to promote

domestic travel to the state, as foreign travel may take some time to return to normal.

- Allow visitors who have received both vaccinations to travel freely inside the state, be it rail, road or air, as long as they follow all of the protocols.
- Start a promotional campaign inviting travellers to the state and highlighting how safe it is, as well as promoting the state's destinations and attractions.

FHRAI has further assured that the industry is committed to following all health and safety protocols issued by the authorities.

## The need for PM's intervention

FHRAI has asked the PM to intervene and advise the relevant authorities to announce the ₹60,000 crore Loan Guarantee Scheme.

**D**espite the passage of 75 days since the Finance Minister's announcement on June 28, 2021 regarding the sanctioning of ₹60,000 crore under the Loan Guarantee Scheme for COVID-affected sectors and FHRAI's letter to the FM dated August 5, 2021, neither the scheme nor the operational guideline have been notified by the Finance Ministry.

On the contrary, the Loan Guarantee Scheme for the health sector, which was announced at the same time, has been notified, and NCGTC has issued the required rules.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Indian hospitality industry. Among all of the economy's major industries, hospitality was the first to collapse and would be the last to recover, taking several years. Due to COVID-19, the hospitality industry has been

subjected to the most stringent restrictions, protocols, and losses.

The country's entire hospitality ecosystem has been destroyed by two waves with extremely strong ripple effects, and even today, when all other sectors are allowed to operate normally, the hospitality sector is subjected to a variety of restrictions across the country, causing it to bleed continuously.

FHRAI has, therefore, requested that the Prime Minister intervene in this matter

and advise the concerned authorities to immediately notify the ₹60,000 crore Loan Guarantee Scheme with 100 per cent government guarantee and long-term repayment options as an effective measure to address the colossal damages suffered by the country's tourism and hospitality sector.



**The hospitality sector was the first one to fall and will be the last to recover**





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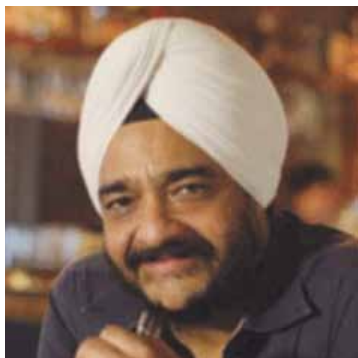
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# 'Suspend OYO IPO citing'

FHRAI has requested SEBI to suspend OYO's IPO until the inadequacies found are addressed, in order to protect the interests of all stakeholders and the general public.

**F**HRAI has made a submission to SEBI to suspend Oravel Stays Limited's (Oravel/OYO) IPO process, citing gross misstatements and inadequate disclosures in the DRHP. "CCI is conducting an inquiry. No company under investigation by the Director General of the CCI for anti-competitive practises has been allowed to launch an IPO. Oravel failed to adequately disclose the consequences of an unfavourable verdict in the DRHP's Risk Factors section," reveals **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI. CCI identified a prima facie case for initiating an investigation for violations of the Competition Act, 2002, based on the information filed by FHRAI. DRHP does not unveil the true nature of business of subsidiaries, their differences, overlap and competitive nature with each other and the holding company, drawing attention to the 80 subsidiaries.



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI

“Oravel's definition of material litigation is overly narrow”



**Pradeep Shetty**  
Joint Secretary, FHRAI

“Oravel runs under OYO trade name, which it shares with subsidiaries”



"It is worth noting that Oravel operates under the OYO trade name, which it shares with all of its subsidiaries. Several subsidiaries maintain the same website and management. All of the subsidiaries are involved in the same business activities as Oravel, according to DRHP. DRHP is mute on whether these subsidiaries compete with each other as well as Oravel. We believe that the subsidiaries formed by Oravel are shell companies created to transfer debts from one company to another and present a false picture of Oravel's financials," says **Pradeep Shetty**, Jt. Hony. Secretary, FHRAI.

## Recognising the right efforts

EC member Vikram Shetty, along with the Pune Hotel members, felicitated the Commissioner of Police, Pune for his service in lodging FIR against copyright agencies for illegally forcing hotels and collecting fees from guests in wedding events.





# Telangana Tourism Policy 2021-26

FHRAI has submitted its suggestions for the draft Telangana Tourism Policy 2021-26 to TSTDC in order to enhance growth and promotion of the tourism sector in the state.

**F**HRAI has lauded the Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation (TSTDC) for including the Association in the recommendations for the draft Telangana Tourism Policy 2021-2026. FHRAI's inputs are:

## **INDUSTRY STATUS:**

The hospitality sector should be granted industry status by using a web-based registration process similar to the MSME Udyam Registration. Hotels with valid licences and statutory registrations will be eligible. The benefits that must be offered to the sector under the industry status are: Charging industrial rates for power, water, taxes, and other payments; charging industrial rates for additional floor space index; and applicability of all industrial incentives to the hospitality sector.

## **FORMATION OF STPB:**

A State Tourism Promotion Board (STPB) should be formed to oversee the growth and

promotion. The STPB can be formed under the Chairmanship of a senior minister with representatives from related government departments, domain experts from the field of tourism and hospitality, and associations working in the travel and tourism trade as its members. The Board would be responsible for all developmental issues and challenges in the sector, as well as dealing with all ministries at the GoI level and all departments at the state level through a single point of contact.

## **NOTIFICATION OF STPZ:**

Potential destinations should be designated as special tourism promotion zones with special budgetary provisions and incentive schemes.

## **PROVISION OF LAND AT SUBSIDISED RATES:**

The government's provision of land at subsidised prices would play a critical role in attracting new and prospective investors to the sector.

## **SUBSIDIES AND INCENTIVES:**

Investment subsidies and tax holidays for STPZs and other tourism projects implemented in the state are essential. This will have a soaring impact on the state of Telangana's tourism and hospitality sector.

## **EASE OF DOING BUSINESS:**

The number of statutory/regulatory compliances/licences/certificates/permissions and NOCs necessary for hospitality projects must be rationalised/reduced.

## **MICE TOURISM:**

The state needs to devise specific policies for promotion of MICE tourism and the same should be laid down in the Tourism Policy. MICE branding, marketing, training programmes, international and domestic MICE B2B meetings, champion sector scheme strategy, MICE travel marts, and so on, should all be included. Similarly, the policy should focus on developing similar infrastructure in other cities.

## **GST RATIONALISATION:**

The hospitality sector should not be considered a 'Sin Industry', GST rates on room tariffs should be reduced, and input tax credit (ITC) for GST imposed on food should be allowed.

## **EMERGING TOURISM SEGMENTS:**

The state tourism policy should make a clear mapping of the emerging tourism segments in the state, such as cruise, film, golf, spiritual and wellness and education, among others.

## **TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE:**

Infrastructure, transportation and communications must all be well-equipped, and they must all be entirely seamless all across the state for it to become a favoured tourist destination. To strengthen these aspects, short and medium-term milestones should be set.

The Association, thus, hopes that these recommendations will help in the development of a Tourism Policy that is friendly to tourists and investors in Telangana, as well as the expansion of the tourism industry in the state.



**Potential destinations should be notified as special tourism promotion zones**



# Complaints of non-payment

FHRAI has encouraged Ritesh Agarwal, Founder and CEO of Oravel Stays Limited, to come forward and resolve the grievances of pending dues of its members.

**O**n behalf of a large number of its aggrieved members, FHRAI has written to Ritesh Agarwal, Founder and CEO, Oravel Stays Limited, to draw the company's urgent attention to their complaints of pending dues from Oravel Stays Limited and its subsidiary companies, OYO Hotels and Homes Private Limited (OHHPL), My preferred Transformation & Hospitality Ltd., and others.

The DRHP of OSL was released on September 30, 2021, and OYO's IPO is a huge US\$ 1.25 billion tranche. As per the DRHP, Oravel's equity shares are limited to US\$ 84,300 million, with an offer for sale of up to US\$ 13,285.32 million by SVF India Holdings (Cayman) limited, equity shares aggregating up to US\$ 516.21 million by A1 Holdings Inc., equity shares aggregating up to US\$ 231.32 million by China Lodging Holdings (HK) Limited, and equity shares

aggregating up to US\$ 267.12 million by Global Ivy Ventures LLP. Several litigations, arbitrations, criminal proceedings, and FIRs have been filed against Oravel Stays and OYO and/or its promoters by hoteliers across the country. Even as OYO prepares to issue an IPO worth



**OYO's IPO is a huge US\$ 1.25 billion tranche**



US\$ 1.25 billion, it has a number of aggrieved partners to whom it owes money, and there are pending litigations and claims in this regard. While the amount owing to such claimants in Rupees is insignificant in comparison to the IPO size, and they have been partners throughout OYO's journey, it would be prudent to sit down and resolve their claims amicably rather than engaging in protracted and costly litigation.

As a matter of camaraderie, the Association has encouraged Agarwal to come forward and resolve the grievances of pending dues of its members, as these hotels would always be present in the hospitality business, and OYO would eventually want to collaborate with them again at some point in the future. Several FHRAI members are small independent hoteliers who cannot afford to engage in such litigations, so FHRAI must step in to help them.

# TN removes curbs on bar timings

During a meeting hosted by MOT, SIHRA submitted a memorandum to central government tourism officials, outlining the inputs offered by all stakeholders from the southern states.

**I**n the last week of October 2021, the Ministry of Tourism convened a meeting in Bengaluru with all tourism ministers from the southern states.

SIHRA delivered a memorandum to the tourism officials of the central government, which included input from all stakeholders from the southern states.

SIHRA's constant follow-up with the Tamil Nadu government through the Commissioner Prohibition and Excise has yielded positive results, as the state government has removed restrictions on bar timings, and they can now operate regardless of whether they are open or closed at any given time.

SIHRA also hosted an interactive session with Nilgiris District Collector and Director



**D.V.S. Somaraju**  
Treasurer, FHRAI



**SIHRA's follow-up with the state govt yielded good results**

of Tourism. According to the Director of Tourism, the Tamil Nadu government is



considering giving the hospitality sector industry status, with incentives at par with the hotels in Karnataka.

In another development, D.V.S. Somaraju, SIHRA EC Member and Treasurer, FHRAI, met with G. Kishan Reddy, Minister of Tourism, Government of India, to discuss issues affecting the hospitality sector in the southern states.



# Copyright difficulties

HRAWI met with the Pune Commissioner of Police and presented a formal appeal to him, seeking that he take note of the crime and register an economic offence.

**H**RAWI has initiated a campaign to raise awareness about the copyright issues that hotels and restaurants face when playing recorded music. The campaign was initiated in response to recent incidents in Pune, when two Mumbai-based private firms extorted ₹1.37 lakh from businessmen under the pretext of granting copyright licences for performing musical performances at star hotel wedding ceremonies. HRAWI met with the Pune Commissioner of Police and presented a formal appeal to him, seeking that he takes note of the crime and register an economic offence against the private agencies for extortion. HRAWI has also sent out circulars to its member businesses informing them of the new law. "The law states that wedding venues are not required to seek a licence in order to play any sound recording at social or religious ceremonies. We have received multiple complaints from members concerning copyright agencies intruding into wedding parties in order to extract money from hotel guests. This illegal activity has spread all through the state, and we want to ensure that all hospitality facilities and their guests, are aware of the law," says **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI.

HRAWI has quoted a Commerce Ministry statement dated August 27,



**Sherry Bhatia**  
President, HRAWI



**Wedding venues do not require obtaining license**

2019, which states that all functions are exempt from copyright charges. According to the Association, section 52 of the Copyright Act of 1957 exempts all religious ceremonies from paying royalties or licence costs.

"These private agencies have a criminal history and operate similarly to bank recovery agents. They engage in acts, such as making threatening phone calls to hotel managers, trespassing during weddings, and photographing or videotaping events undercover. They send legal warnings to the hotel owners and the guests, threatening to



**Pradeep Shetty**  
Sr. Vice President, HRAWI



**These private agencies have a criminal history**

file FIRs and charges against the hotel and the guests. These agencies tend to gain unauthorised access to private venues to discreetly film events. Such crimes have been classified as criminal trespass. The Bombay High Court, in a ruling dated April 25, 2018, made it clear that police authorities must file a trespassing complaint whenever they enter private functions without power. We are demanding that the police take notice of the crime and file a criminal complaint against these organisations, who have been extorting money from hotels and visitors," says **Pradeep Shetty**, Sr. Vice President, HRAWI

**HRAWI**

## Amend E-Commerce Rules: FHRAI

**O**n October 20, 2021 a delegation of FHRAI comprising of Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President; Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, Vice President; Pradeep Shetty, Joint Honorary Secretary; Nirav Gandhi, Executive Committee Member; Jimmy Shaw, Honorary Secretary, HRAWI; and Jaison Chacko, Secretary

General, FHRAI, met virtually with Nidhi Khare, Additional Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India. The meeting was in reference to the suggestions submitted by FHRAI on the proposed amendments to the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020. The delegation shared industry's views on the

proposed amendments to E-Commerce Rules with the Addl. Secretary. The Additional Secretary appreciated the suggestions of FHRAI and advised to engage the legal team to reformulate the suggestion in sync with the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, so that it can withstand any legal challenges/objections.

# In the lap of royalty

Six Senses has opened its doors in India. **Sangjay Choegyal**, GM, Six Senses Fort Barwara, discusses how the hotel will redefine sustainability, wellness, and cocktails in India for luxury travellers.

 Lipla Negi



**Sangjay Choegyal**

**I**n the world of hospitality, this is a match made in heaven. To the mix, Fort Barwara brings legacy of history, heritage and the famed Rajasthani culture of 'padharo mhare des'. Six Senses adds its pioneering wellness tourism and passion for sustainability to the mix. As a result, travellers will have a pleasurable experience while staying in the exotic and culturally rich 14th century fort of Barwara. The property first opened its doors in October of this year, and it has instantly been the talk of the town. Two Bollywood actors are rumoured to have chosen it as 'the venue' for their grand Indian wedding. It appears to be a fantastic pick for huge Indian weddings, with the right mix of historic glory and architectural grandeur. However, the brand is not actively looking for wedding business. **Sangjay Choegyal,**

General Manager, Six Senses Fort Barwara, reveals how the brand seeks to redefine sustainability, wellness, and cocktails for both international and domestic travellers in an exclusive interview with the FHRAI magazine.

***Is India ready to be a sought-after wellness destination keeping in mind the neighbours, such as Maldives, Seychelles and Singapore?***

The definition of luxury has evolved a lot in recent years. I believe luxury is about creating beautiful spaces for your guests and help them reconnect with the royal times. This is what we have strived to do at Six Senses Fort Barwara, and I believe, we are more than ready to be positioned in this light.

***What are your reasons behind picking Rajasthan for your India debut?***

See, Rajasthan boasts of so many great existing properties, the state has warm and hospitable people, stunning architecture, interesting tribes, and most of all, a fascinating and beguiling history. Fort Barwara



**Traditional artisans have brought the Barwara Fort back to its former glory**





encompasses and seamlessly weaves all these traits into the restored 14th century fort and palaces we call Six Senses Fort Barwara. The guests can also have a dekho of the wild: Ranthambore National Park, which is near to our resort.

***Indians often prefer foreign destinations for luxury vacations. Would they be equally excited for a domestic destination?***

The recent restrictions on international travel have made us all appreciate the beauty and amazing experiences one can have much closer to home, as well as how easy it is to spend a memorable long weekend away on a whim. With this being Six Senses' first hotel in India, we have a great opening discover package, including daily unique Six Senses experiences. We hope to show the domestic market how we implement best practises around sustainability, how we think about wellbeing, and how serious we are about our cocktails through fun and engaging workshops and rituals..

***Has 'social business' been one of your considerations for entering India?***

Some special events are organised within our fort walls. From our Barwara state rooms, we have built a banquet hall within the Mardana Mahal Palace. Certain events also take place on the lawns of the 'Zanana Bagh' with the exclusive 'Zanana Mahal' towering above.

***Do you see luxury hotels in demand?***

I do. With the challenges and inconveniences to



international travel that is going to be around for a while, the options of world-class resorts and destinations on-your-doorstep will be sought after.

***What is the famed 'Six Senses experience' you have curated for luxury connoisseurs?***

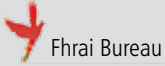
The Fort and the two palaces it encompasses have been restored, highlighting the magnificence of the 700-year-old structures as they are; we have neither demolished and rebuilt new structures, nor have we plastered and painted over them. Traditional building techniques and a focus on craftsmen and artisans to carefully restore the inherent beauty and power of the old, paired with contrasting contemporary suites and interiors, create truly distinctive spaces. The Six Senses experience is not about over-the-top opulence or countless chandeliers in the bathrooms. It is all about giving our guests spaces and chances to reconnect with themselves, others, and the world around them.





# Power Tariff Woes

Regional Presidents urge the central and state governments to grant the hospitality sector 'industry status' and supply electricity to the sector at industrial rates.



**Sherry Bhatia**  
President, HRAWI

## THE POWER CHALLENGES

The Maharashtra government issued a G.O. dated April 7, 1999 to charge industrial rates on power supplied to hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality establishments, based on the central government's strong recommendation to the various states and UTs to confer industry status to hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-related establishments and activities. Details of the various concessions would be initiated later, according to the directive.

After two decades of consistent follow-ups with the Maharashtra government, the state recently granted industry status to the

hospitality sector. This was a huge relief, especially since it came at a time when the industry was still reeling from the two lockdowns. The government provided relief in Non-Agricultural Tax and Electricity Duty shortly after the announcement, but it has yet to provide us with relief on other statutory charges. The industry has demanded that the government release the eligibility criteria for receiving industry benefits as soon as possible. We urge the government to offer benefits on electricity tariffs at the earliest.

For the hospitality industry, we have been demanding that power be taxed at industrial rates rather than commercial prices. While Goa has had industrial rates for the hospitality and tourism sector since 1999, Maharashtra continues to provide electricity at substantially higher commercial rates despite the fact that it has been classified as an industry.

Given the magnitude of the losses and the length of time it will take to recuperate, the state government should implement the G.O. to confer industrial rates on power immediately. When operations resume their pre-pandemic routines, the savings on the same will bring a significant relief, allowing businesses to cushion the blow of the losses incurred during the lockdown.

  
**We urge the government to offer benefits on power tariffs** 







**Sudesh Poddar**  
President, HRAEI

### A MAJOR BLOW

The HRAEI has been urging all of the region's state governments to grant industry status to the hospitality sector. Hotels will profit from the status by getting lower electricity and water tariffs, as well as lower property tax and licence fees. Power tariffs, especially, have been a burden, with little revenue generated due to the prolonged lockdown. Certain hotels have been accorded industrial status by the states

fied 110 hotels. Many have not applied as the classification is not mandatory. The committee will propose norms that will be finalised by the state in order to bring benefits to them as well. They will have to apply online and the state will make the final decision following a field visit.

The new rules apply in Karnataka to hotels that are registered with the Centre's Tourism Ministry. For a five-year term, star hotels are eligible for tax rebates. The state has 62 star hotels. However, it would have been better if the facility had been extended to all hotels. HRAEI urges all state governments in the region to



**The sector requires policy intervention to avert the grave effects of COVID**



of Maharashtra and Karnataka. With the status in place, eligible hotels will be charged industrial rates for power, water, taxes, and dues, rather than the commercial prices currently in effect.

Also, establishments will be charged at industrial rates for increased floor space index. The Ministry of Tourism has classi-

follow in these states' footsteps and go above and beyond for the classification standards of hotels.

The ongoing pandemic has inflicted a major blow to the sector, which requires rapid policy intervention to avert the grave effects of the global health crisis.



**Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**  
President, HRANI

hotel industry is being charged under commercial category for the power bills and a fixed charge is also added to it, which results into exorbitant bills.

With the onset of COVID-19, FY21 witnessed contracted revenues and massive operating losses, resulting in increase in debt levels (companies opted for loan moratoriums and borrowed incrementally for liquidity and working capital).



### ISSUES & DEMANDS

The hospitality industry is inherently capital-intensive in nature with a long gestation period, industry-wide debt levels for the industry have historically been high. The HRANI has sent representations to the governments in the Northern states, including UTs, to grant 'industry' status. This would allow hotels benefits like concession in taxes and industrial rates on consumables like electricity and water, among others.

In fact, some of the states have declared hospitality and tourism as an industry, but the industry status in terms of concessions has been neither extended nor implemented. The central and state governments must issue and enforce the G.O. for water charges, electricity and other levies on industrial rates for the hospitality industry. The



**The industry status in terms of concessions hasn't been extended**



The economic fallout on account of the COVID-19 pandemic led to significant financial stress for hotel owners, potentially impacting the long-term viability of many hospitality firms.

To mitigate the situation arising out of the pandemic, the power department and respective DISCOMS have been requested for waiver of fixed charges/demand charges at least for the lockdown period. Representations from HRANI have been sent to the central and state governments on the matter.



# A holistic ecosystem

We were not immune to COVID-19, but it was helpful as we were able to use the downtime to boost our business' efficiencies, asserts **Hasan Patel**, Director, Tripjack.



**Hasan Patel**

**T**ripjack offers B2B travel services to travel agents, large businesses and corporations in the areas of flights, hotels, visas, group travel, and rail. It also caters to both domestic and international markets. Its is a 360-degree one-stop platform with a team of 300+ people across multiple cities and a 24x7 service. Travel agents prefer platform as it allows them to serve their clients instantly and book easily. Tripjack API/XML, which is also 'white labelled' for use on their platforms, is integrated by large businesses. Our unparalleled reach of 30,000+ travel partners present across the country and strong distribution in 2,200+ Tier-I, II, and III cities, makes us a must-have platform for hospitality partners. Our focus is to empower hospitality partners with a technology platform of the future that is tailored to this specific customer niche.

The plans/benefits we offer to hospitality partners are: Connectivity with leading channel managers; flexible and hotel-friendly payment plans; multiple options for hotels to promote their property across our marketing channels; industry leading support team; flexible approach in-tune with the dynamic hospitality needs; adherence to hotel's rate strategy guidelines; hotel-friendly commission plans with zero annual or listing fees; distribution to a closed user group audience, affording hotels flexibility to better manage yields and push higher occupancies; and access to group and packaging products, marketing tools, and cross-sell features.

We can help hotels in regaining business by enhancing their distribution strategy. Hence, hotels are keen to work with a trusted, legacy brand that allows them the control and flexibility to manage their distribution on their own

terms. Also, partnering with a B2B travel company allows hotels to spread their distribution and lessen their reliance on one channel.

We are one of the country's largest flight consolidators, and we are also looking to extend our leadership position to hotels. Our vision is to build a comprehensive, tech-enabled travel ecosystem for our travel agent partners, with a multi-product approach. Over the next 12-18 months, there will be a strong focus on hotels, with the goal of becoming the preferred distribution partner for hotels and expanding to regions outside of India, starting with the Middle East early next year. COVID had a huge impact on the global travel sector that we had never seen before. We were not immune to the effects, but in hindsight, it helped us because we were able to use the downtime to build efficiencies in our business and focus heavily on our product and technology. We realised the negative impact would not last forever, so we focussed on keeping ties with our partners and preparing to aggressively grow our business once the pandemic subsided.

During the lockdown, we focussed on tech and product to ensure that the user journey on our platform was the best in the market. We conducted many discussions with our travel agent partners to better understand their pain points on both the product and support fronts, which helped us streamline our processes and make our platform more intuitive and user-friendly. We also ran aggressive incentive programmes for our travel agency partners to help them better their commercials. On the supplier side, we engaged with our supply partners and worked with them to streamline our operations and extend better support to our customers. [www.tripjack.com](http://www.tripjack.com)

**“We can help hotels in regaining business by enhancing their distribution strategy”**





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# Managing operating costs

FHRAI EC member discusses how the hospitality industry must employ out-of-the-box strategies for managing operating costs, on account of disruptions caused by COVID-19.



**Param Kannampilly**  
Chairman & MD, Concept Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., The Fern Hotels & Resorts

## OUT-OF-THE-BOX STRATEGIES

Managing operational cost is one of the most difficult tasks in any circumstances. It has become extremely challenging with the onslaught of the pandemic.

There are certain fixed costs and you cannot do much about it. However, there are certain areas where a manager can act judiciously and limit the expenses.

As far as The Fern Hotels & Resorts is concerned, we are fortunate that we have been following the principle of three Rs – reduce, reuse and recycle – since the day of our inception. This way we have managed to keep our costs of operations in control and have also reduced the carbon footprint. I must say that the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us to be innovative and think out of the box, so that the operating cost is kept at a

minimal. Moreover, any idea which is innovative can be implemented across the group and more than 80 hotels can benefit simultaneously.

We all know that electricity charges are extremely steep. The challenge is to keep power on in areas occupied by the guests. Similarly, there is no need to keep the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system running at the full capacity.

The engineering department has played a stellar role in keeping the operating cost down during the pandemic and is continuing to come with newer and more innovative ideas for reducing the consumption of power.

The chefs can also play their part in making sure that the wastage is virtually nothing. The elaborate menus can be trimmed and only fast-moving items can be kept in hotels where the occupancy is very low. Buffets can also be done away with and nice TDH menus can be introduced.



**Managing operational cost has become challenging with the onset of COVID-19**





# A golden opportunity

The scholarship programme for students interested in pursuing B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration has the great promise to become a game changer for the economy.

**T**he Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), in collaboration with its regional associations, has announced the commencement of a scholarship programme for students interested in studying a three-year B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration at the FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management (FHRAI-IHM), Greater Noida. FHRAI-IHM is the first and only private institution associated with the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT), an autonomous entity under the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Children of employees of member establishment of FHRAI and its regional associations will be offered 50 per cent waiver in the admission, enrolment, tuition and examination fees, and 20 per cent waiver will be offered to children from the families of hospitality patrons or employees.

In solidarity with the plights of the workers who lost their jobs during pandemic, as a special case, the scholarship will be provided to the children of hospitality sector employees of member establishments who lost jobs during the pandemic, based on a certification by the member establishment and the regional associations.

The admissions will be based on the merit of class 12th result, availability of seats and approval of the affiliating organisation viz., NCHMCT, Noida. Registration is open for direct admission at <https://www.fhrai-ihm.com/>.

"India's tourism and hospitality sector has the potential to become the growth engine of our economy by accelerating demand and supply in the market along with generating employment in millions. At the moment, the entire sector is reeling under the impact of the pandemic and we are witnessing its cascading effects on the field of hospitality education as well. Under the present environment, all stakeholders should join hands to ensure that the growth prospects of the hospitality industry do not get hamstrung due to current challenges. With the launch of the scholarship scheme, FHRAI and its regional associations will take the lead to promote hospitality education in the country to pick up from where we left off prior to the pandemic," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

"The scholarship scheme can be availed by children of employees working in the member establishments of

FHRAI and its regional associations who fulfil the age and eligibility criteria for admission as per the NCHMCT norms. The associations will shortlist the eligible candidates from their region and recommend them for enrolment in FHRAI-IHM under the scholarship programme. It is our endeavour to create a qualified and committed workforce for the sector, and we would like a maximum number of students to avail of this scholarship opportunity," says **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, Vice President, FHRAI, and President, HRANI.

FHRAI-IHM is built on a sprawling seven-acre campus



**Arun Kumar Singh**



**FHRAI and its regional associations will promote hospitality education**

with state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure at Knowledge City in Greater Noida. It hosts a well-equipped 70-bedded hostel for girls and 200-bedded hostel for boys on the campus.

The institute boasts of dedicated and experienced faculty working under Arun Kumar Singh, Director of the institute, former Principal of IHM, Mumbai. FHRAI-IHM assures students of placement after completion of the three-year education programme.



# Skills for future leaders post-COVID

The industry will eventually return to its former grandeur, opines **Ashima Chatterjee Misra**, Assistant Lecturer, Rooms Division & Business Communication, FHRAI-IFM.





he hospitality industry is a 24-hour, 365-day flourishing service sector, employing more than 11 million people globally to serve guests as service providers. It is a business of making guests feel welcomed, calm, and satisfied with the purpose of their visit. Hence, hospitality is often defined as a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to gain mutual understanding between the organisation and public for meeting market demand. When it comes to sustainable effort, the pandemic has changed the world. There are many insecurities that surround us, and these have improved since we began working in hospitality. Hence, all hospitality service providers have had to rethink their systems and procedures in order to deliver the highest quality service in to attract and retain guests.

and upskill to meet the expectations of their guests. During the pandemic, hospitality saw a revolution in service, and the skill pertaining to it has become a must. Digital marketing, emotional intelligence, and digital communication have played a key role in reaching out to the public, while Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been updated to reflect the preventive services provided by the pandemic. To manage the team and emerge as a leader among the others, the current hospitality workforce must work on themselves to develop such qualities.

Many affiliated hospitality education and training institutes and online platforms are assisting in upskilling and reskilling the industry's workforce. We, at FHRAI-IHM, are also trying to contribute to these



**Ashima Chatterjee  
Misra**

In case of the hospitality sector, the quality of the deliverables depends on the level of competence exhibited by the employees during their service. Whether it is hands-on skills like creating a dish, serving a glass of wine, or making a perfect bed, or interpersonal skills, and so on, skills have long been the backbone of work in the sector. To win over guests' hearts and turn them into brand loyalists, a hospitality professional must have a balance of both hands-on abilities and interpersonal skills. The sector has taken a hard hit on operating speed due to the pandemic, but it is progressively recovering. However, the ability to retain these guests is entirely dependent on the quality of the services provided, which is directly proportionate to skill level. Hence, every hotelier must take steps to reskill



**All hospitality service providers have had to rethink their systems and procedures**



developments by providing updated training to aspiring hoteliers as well as performing reskilling programmes for those already employed in the business. Many researchers are also breaking the sweat to discover and investigate sustainable approaches that will aid in the skill development in tourism and hospitality. The losses incurred by the service sector may be made up by investing in skill development at all levels, and the industry will eventually return to its former grandeur.

# Brighter future

There has been a declining trend in bookings since COVID and pricing is more competitive than ever. How the industry leaders respond to such uncertainty is a million-dollar question.



**Maina Ray**

## **Maina Ray**

**Associate Director-Sales, The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat**

### **IMPROVISATION IS THE NAME OF THE GAME**

There is no hiding the fact that the hospitality industry has been affected the most due to COVID-19. However, on the brighter side, the pandemic has been a great learning experience; we have learnt to innovate and improvise to ride through the crisis. This aspect is characterised by its increasing room resource and tight margins. Dynamism is the name of the game and on a personal note, I feel that this has been my key takeaway. Demand ambiguity is a major component of the hospitality industry. On-field it is challenging to predict demand uncertainty. The only way hotels can mitigate the current uncertainty in demand is by securing a base occupancy, and a dynamic pricing as per the demand.

While focussing on certain segments, such as the airline or seafarers crew, relocation movement is of paramount importance in maintaining a healthy occupancy rate and then driving the average daily rate (ADR). Additionally, the competition makes it vital for hotel revenue managers to adjust to their strategies to remain relevant. We must be aware of our surroundings to monitor upcoming developments or events and react before the competition to negate the impact of the uncertainty around us. It is crucial than ever to hire the right people for the job so as to continue to be ahead of the competition. Above all, we as the leaders need to maintain a positive outlook for the sake of our teams and the industry.

The biggest concern post-pandemic has been the health and safety of consumers stepping out either to travel or dine. The degree of cleanliness is a new luxury, and this would become the price the guest would like to pay to come to hotels. The recent trend of home deliveries carried out by the hotels to ensure that the patrons do not compromise on their celebrations, which we perform via Marriott Bonvoy on Wheels at good prices, with value-add ons and combo meals. At The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat, we offer several elements to make sure that the guests achieve a luxurious experience, while adhering to all the COVID-19 safety protocols.



**Hotels can mitigate the uncertainty in demand by securing a base occupancy**







## Rishi Mattu General Manager, ITC Rajputana, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Jaipur

### A CRUCIAL PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY

With corporates and conferences being minimalistic, the leisure segment, which includes travellers who want to embark on motorable journeys, is the segment that is actually using the hotels. There are individuals who are visiting friends and family, as well as families or groups of friends who are moving together.

We have also noticed that the booking window, which is the length of time before the arrival date during which the booking is made, has started to shrink to a week or less, compared to 10-15 days in the past because corporate or conference travellers prefer to make confirmed bookings far in advance so that they can plan their itinerary.

Travel waivers, impromptu, or revenge travel are all contributing to the uncertainty in the trend. Domestic leisure travel is now moving to short-term plans, such as weekends, and we are seeing an increase in occupancies where weekdays are quieter.

Hotels often layer their businesses in such a manner that corporates, travel agents, family travellers, leisure

travellers, and probably conferences are all segregated.

With the current scenario of the pandemic, uncertainty has emerged mostly as a result of travel restrictions that vary from state to state, and there has been little or no corporate movement, but we are seeing some increasing trends in this segment currently.

Leisure travel, on the other hand, is prone to cancellations, and there have been instances where bookings have dropped dramatically due to a variety of factors.

Since the corporate and MICE segments are also seeking to re-establish normalcy, regaining their window for taking a vacation is narrowing, and as a result, plans are made and changed, and our occupancy charts show peaks and valleys at times.



**Rishi Mattu**



**There has been little or no corporate movement organising conferences**





Anuj Chaudhary

## Anuj Chaudhary General Manager, ibis Gurgaon Golf Course

### PREPARING AFTER COVID-19 MAYHEM

Pacing between being a necessity and a luxury, the view on hospitality is an ever-changing concept. India has embraced the sector with new businesses understanding the need to provide an experience to anyone travelling out of town. The COVID-induced 'slowdown', however, has allowed the sector to and be ready in dealing with uncertainty and health crisis.

With travel restrictions in place and international travel at a halt, the industry was faced with a conundrum in managing demand and supply. While demand for hotel rooms remains unstable, supply has continued to grow, albeit slowly. After a long period of waiting and juggling between deadlines, hotels that were slated to open in 2020 have finally opened their doors for business.

Our guests now have a larger selection of hotels. Increased price sensitivity triggers an instant decline. Hence, in this consumer-led environment, hotel pricing has become more competitive than before, with hotels scrambling for a fair share of the pie. As business leaders, it is our responsibility to promptly understand this impact, and we need to be agile enough to respond to new

opportunities. This is when the three-step progression must come into play: Survive, revive and thrive.

The guest experience will be the key driving factor in enhancing occupancy levels, and our team members are the ones who can deliver. We have guests with newfangled requests during these peaks and troughs in demand. Some we can handle by virtue of being in the business, and others have caused us to rethink how we handle our guests. We have had to explore different ways of putting our customers at ease and making them feel ALLSAFE, Accor's hygiene certification. Thankfully, hotels have become more resilient to sudden disruptions, and we are now in a better position to serve consumers with ever-changing guidelines and restrictions.

Finally, it is imperative that we work to retain our guests, both new and loyal, in order to ensure long and prosperous partnerships. Preparation is key for minimising negative outcomes and maintaining hotel performance. To understand the need of the hour in this new normal, we must put ourselves 'in their shoes'. Increases in direct bookings through hotel channels are directly proportional to increased loyalty. Dining at Accor Hotels has just become more rewarding with the launch of the ALL Food & Beverage offer, indicating an evolution of loyalty and enrolment of new members. These are returning clients that help sustain employee morale, making it a win-win situation for everyone.



**The sector has a fair chance to survive if it can manage the ever-changing demand**







## Ajay Kanojia General Manager, Sayaji Hotel, Pune

### COUNTER MECHANISM

The competitive rates in the market are a substantial challenge to meet. Indian brands have obstacles due to stereotyped mindsets, in addition to the cut-throat competition. The city movement is slow as the airports are shut and IT adopts the work-from-home lifestyle. As corporates book through OTA, the number of OTA bookings has increased.

For the MLM business, we identified unstructured segments. We saw an opportunity and offered hospitality to the production house that we hosted for the actors and crew, and state-level cricket reality shows. We concentrated on long-stay guests, which had been planned prior to the pandemic, and corporate relocations boosted sales. We offered local guests staycation packages as a break from their normal routine. We also supplied amenities on a request basis to eliminate waste and give a more efficient way of providing services, focusing on health, and efficiently using manpower as required.

Guests are more health conscious and request precautionary measures. Our guests, on the other hand, were willing to comply in order to stay, as our hospitality remained pleasant. One of the positive aspects is that customers have grown to trust the brand even during difficult times and have become friendlier like extended family. Long-term guests have found us to be the right place to stay. Yes, it is a post-pandemic phenomenon because of the psychological mindset and government restrictions that have influenced corporate movements.

The supply is ample at the moment, but demand is low due to IT changes and the closure of the airport. The numbers are not at par pre-COVID levels.

### WIN GUESTS' CONFIDENCE

We provided staycation packages and special relocation packages for corporate travellers, including laundry and transfer services; festive packages to celebrate with family; EP transit package for DFIT focussed during long weekends and festivals; corporate weekend home packages; celebration family affair; and pay for dining and stay free to encourage guests to stay with us.

In comparison to pre-COVID times, weekend travel and movement has grown. As the hotel is close to a holiday destination, guests who are on vacation have preferred to stay with us. As a result, it is a little unusual that as the demand for revenge travel has climbed, so has the demand for accommodation.

Post-Diwali revenge travel or a return to normal in the IT business, auto and ancillary movements will increase. As a result, we have forecasted challenging numbers in terms of revenue projections.



Ajay Kanojia



**The city movement is slow as the airports are shut and IT adopts WFH lifestyle**





# A renewed approach

The reputation of the property has helped us achieve decent business recovery after first lockdown was lifted, says **Shobhit Sawhney**, GM, Park Hyatt Hyderabad.



Nisha Verma



**Shobhit Sawhney**

**P**ark Hyatt Hyderabad which is situated in the heart of Hyderabad's plush Banjara Hills, has registered month-on-month increase in the quantum of domestic travel, confirming signs of recovery," shares Sawhney. During lockdown when international connectivity was restricted, domestic travel became the key factor in driving the business of the hotel.

After post-COVID-19 lockdown, the business faced a strong rebound mainly through staycations, weddings, film shoots and certain corporate sector activity. "With Park Hyatt Hyderabad being a coveted wedding destination offering exclusive designed spaces, our events segment saw a surge in bookings. On top of that, our specialty restaurants acted as catalyst to get footfall back in our F&B spaces," Sawhney elaborates.

## STEPS FOR RECOVERY

Offering safety and clean environment has always been the hotel's top priority. "We focussed more on a holistic sense of wellbeing from pre-arrival to checkout and beyond. The hotel is reimagining experiences with contactless technology, hygiene and wellbeing manager on the floor to instil confidence among the guests," he says. "As a company, we set out to not only reimagine what events can be. We also provided our guests the support that they needed to organise such events safely, seamlessly and creatively through 'Together by Hyatt' with hybrid meetings, safety and wellbeing, F&B creativity, being the areas of focus," he shares. That apart, Sawhney adds, "Through an exclusive collaboration with headspace, the guests,

members, and colleagues accessed mindfulness exercises, guided meditations and sleep content via the World of Hyatt App either in-room TVs or on the road. Exceptional F&B experiences at our award-winning restaurants supported the recovery process."

## BACK TO BUSINESS

Claiming that the guests had faith and comfort in the Park Hyatt Hyderabad's services, he says, "We have seen an inflow of business since mid-June 2021, be it corporate visits, conferences, leisure travel, weddings, and film shootings. This surge in demand will help us get the desired results that are not like pre-pandemic times. However, we witnessed a positive trend." To its credit, Sawhney said that the Park Hyatt Hyderabad also offered guests the unique 'Work from Hotel' concept, which gained popularity.

## THE WAY FORWARD

He believes that vaccination drives are making the citizens confident. "The news of commencement of offices in the IT sector will boost the business travel. The relaxation in the international inbound travel and opening of borders with countries, such as the UK, Canada, the USA, the Middle East and others is a news of optimism," he comments. Sawhney says that a focussed campaign towards the leisure domestic market of India has seen a surge during the ongoing pandemic. It will help in inbound tourism of Telangana. "The state government has taken measures to stabilise the economy during tough times with many initiatives in place that need to continue in the near future as well. For instance, the recent launch of 'Pink' book supported 'ease of doing business' in Telangana. The introduction of business hub in the northern part of Hyderabad shall also act as a catalyst in the growing economy of the state," he points out.



**Resumption of business following borders reopening has boosted our morale**





# Revival of tourism

From road trips to staycations, **Sylvain Laroche**, Director of Operations, ibis & ibis Styles, India, puts faith in the country's domestic base driving the revival of tourism sector.



Lipla Negi

**I**ndia's domestic market is strong, and it will continue to be a key growth driver in this sector, as local travellers prefer to go on short road trips or stay in the same city. Slow travel is becoming the new normal, allowing guests to enjoy a destination at their leisure while learning about the local culture. We are also witnessing the rise of the environmentally conscious traveller, who searches out sustainable travel opportunities. Factors, such as revenge tourism, festive travel and business reopening, will be key in the revival of India's tourism industry.

## IBIS BRAND GROWING IN INDIA

In India, ibis hotels have been operating since 2008. ibis has risen to 20 hotels in 13 cities, thanks to its convivial, cool contemporary, caring, and proactive spirit. ibis has carved out a niche for itself with over 2,400 hotels across the world. The global pandemic had an impact on our businesses. To stay safely connected in 2020, hospitality and technology combined to adopt a dynamic and multi-pronged digital solutions approach. The road to recovery for the hospitality industry is an extension of this approach, requiring a digitally-enabled front-line workforce capable of anticipating, gauging the pulse of guests, and acting promptly.

The way forward is to re-evaluate business strategies in light of new technology that can help us become more inclusive and sustainable. To run operations efficiently, the industry will also need to implement lean management practises that help decrease waste and cut any non-emergent expenditures.

## ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Businesses across verticals need to swiftly adapt to changing time and needs, as well as evolve their strategies, to remain relevant to consumers in the post-COVID era. Accor has launched several offers, campaigns, and strategic partnerships to reaffirm guests' faith. We presented a one-of-a-kind limited-period offer of 'Pay What You Want' with the opening of ibis Mumbai Vikhroli, and we are introducing another unique deal, 'Pay for Stay and Dine for Free,' to attract guests.

## OFFERING SPACE SOLUTIONS

At ibis, we started offering alternate office space solutions to meet the needs of working professionals and companies by providing all amenities of a traditional office setup with the added flexibility of a virtual office. Work@ibis aims to provide businesses of all sizes with cost-effective and useful solutions. Furthermore, most of our hotels have forayed into food delivery through 'Good Mood Food at your Doorstep.' Our goal with Spice It, our flagship casual dining restaurant, was to meet the demands and needs of visitors while also assuring their safety and convenience. The safety of our guests and team members has always been, and will remain, our priority. The ALLSAFE certification, which Accor has awarded to all 20 ibis hotels in India, including the ibis Mumbai Vikhroli, is a testament to the stringent hygiene measures we have adopted across all touchpoints. We have also implemented contactless experiences at all touchpoints, including check-in and check-out procedures, restaurant F&B offerings, and in-room dining. Our hotels are now pet-friendly, giving pet parents, another reason to visit with their four-legged companions. With the launch of ibis Mumbai Vikhroli, we are expanding our operations, with a few other properties in the works, including another ibis Styles in Goa, ibis in Hebbal, Bengaluru, and ibis in Kalina and Thane, Maharashtra.



Sylvain Laroche



**ibis has risen to 20 hotels, thanks to its caring and proactive spirit**





# FESTIVE boost for HOSPITALITY

The hospitality industry is expected to see exponential occupancy from festive bookings by the fourth quarter of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022.

 Ananya Kukreja





The COVID-19 crisis led to many festivals being cancelled or postponed in 2020, leading one to question their future and nature of celebration. As much as the pandemic has affected the patterns of working and conducting business, it has had its clear upsides in terms of spotlighting domestic tourism. Ease of domestic travel enraptures the pent-up travellers' desire, creating significant opportunities for the hospitality sector. The continued demand for mini vacations or staycations within the safety and comfort of one's resident city is a big contributing factor to festive weekends becoming busier this year.

The festive period in India typically starting from Ganesh Chaturthi and lasting till Holi has always been very important. With the weather turning for the better, especially in North India, the winter season is the time for all festive celebrations. November and December are also the most popular months of weddings celebrations and given the trend of comfort outings, resident city hotels are bound to experience a considerable boost in banquet bookings, as compared to the pre-COVID-19 destination weddings. During the pandemic, fewer occasions were indulged in or celebrated due to the obvious and rightly developed inhibition and fears.

In contrast, the winter of 2021 is witnessing a bit of revenge celebration. Expenditure has been curbed for two years and now there is increase in the propensity to spend as people want to host memorable events and are willing to dole out more. Such opportunities created through the observed development over mere one year in the industry is visibly significant, and the benefits reaped of the same shall be continued to discuss.

## CAUTIOUS BENEFIT

Distinct from earlier preferred short weekend getaways, guests are now opting for air inclusive in-depth stays of over 7-10 days, and this augurs well for the hotel economy. Upon reopening after the second wave, Thomas Cook witnessed a surge in July versus June 2021 and have been consistently growing at over 100 per cent monthly. This demand is being driven not just by metros, but also the tier-II and III markets. In addition to multi-generational families, strong appetite for celebrations is being witnessed from millennials, groups of friends, corporate MICE, and wedding segment, says **Indiver Rastogi**, President and Group Head of Global Business Travel, Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC. The internal survey at Thomas Cook India and SOTC revealed that hygiene and safety was the primordial concern for over 77 per cent of respondents and this has resulted in a strong demand for premium hospitality brands. Guests now prefer eclectic stays like palaces, havelis, private villas and cottages, among others.

Festive and bank holidays are creating an additional opportunity with travellers who are now extending their

stays and exploring hidden gems around the city. Also high in demand are unique experiences like biking trips, hiking, camping, jungle safaris and picnic lunches, and the hotel industry is rising to the occasion to create such value additions to their products and services. The festive season has generated positive consumer sentiment and Thomas Cook have seen a surge of over 5x compared to the Diwali of 2020 with several properties now moving into high occupancy for Christmas and New Year.

Mahindra Holidays have seen a great uptick in the demand for leisure travel with family this festive season. Last two months the resorts experienced an increase in demand. Travellers are choosing trusted brands as their vacation partners, says **Miguel Munoz**, Chief Resorts Officer, Mahindra Holidays and Resorts India Limited. Safety is paramount; people are opting for destinations at drivable distances in the safety of their own vehicles. Multigenerational travel is another observation. The pandemic has made all re-evaluate the priorities. The carefully designed Club Mahindra 'SafeStay' programme provides best-in-class hygiene and safety protocols, which go far beyond governmental regulatory compliance levels. Club Mahindra resorts have, moreover, obtained the highest level of certification in safety and hygiene standards from 'Bureau Veritas', making it safer for families and FIT's to holiday stress-free. They also launched 'Travel with Confidence' initiative that ensured their members took hassle-free holidays to relax through a range of measures, including COVID-19 and travel insurance, COVID testing, and car sanitation services. Club Mahindra also craft unique experiences around the hobbies and interests of family members and other groups. From pottery to glass painting, origami, adventure activities, nature walks, staying in an igloo to dining on a tree, ancient traditions to contemporary arts and archery, horse riding, ATV bikes to paintball and more, the company offers over 2,000 experiences.

At IHCL, there is traction on the 'Dekho Apna Desh' festive offer that gives guests an assortment of exclusive experiences curated to enhance the festive spirit. Ambassador, New Delhi and The Connaught are witnessing significant buoyancy for the festive weekends and shorter booking windows. Taj Mahal, New Delhi has always been known for its warm hospitality and The Art of Festive Gifting. After the journey of transformation and re-opening of the much-loved Machan, the hotel introduced bespoke Machan memorabilia as gifting options and special hampers for children too. The Chambers, with a legacy of over four decades, was re-imagined and re-launched earlier this year and has an exclusive range of gifting solutions presented in designer baskets and boxes.

Emperor Lounge, Delhi's preferred living room, features gourmet selection of handcrafted chocolates, savouries, artisanal bakes and delights along with an exquisite



**Indiver Rastogi**

“Travel desire created many opportunities”



**Miguel Munoz**

“People opt for places at drivable reach”



**Satyajeet Krishnan**

“The trend and mood has been buoyant”



## UPTICK WEDDINGS

The hospitality organisations are now observing strong uptick in weddings and correlated events. Corporate travel is witnessing green shoots and Thomas Cook expects to be at 65 per cent of pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year and together with partner hotels, they hope to see an uptick in business travel and b-leisure. Taj Mahal, New Delhi is a preferred venue for social celebrations and intimate weddings curated by their highly skilled team of culinary professionals, the attentive service team and their colleagues in catering sales who ensure seamless coordination and execution of such events. The magnificent outdoor venues and well-appointed indoor spaces, a repertoire of curated themes, local and global culinary offerings and warm service are some of the key highlights that make Taj Mahal, New Delhi an ideal address for any event.

The coming season has seen a definite upsurge in weddings in city hotels. For people based in the city, it is far more convenient to host the events in one's hometown, given that travel is ideally avoided. This is of particular significance for weddings which involves participation from family elders. As mentioned, there is still a curb in travel to international destinations, while domestic leisure destinations are booming with individual travel; this makes city hotels the prudent choice for hosting mentioned events.

## WAY FORWARD

By the last quarter of 2021 and first quarter of 2022, hospitality industry is expected to gain exponential occupancy from festive bookings. Festive season is an elected occurrence for families and friends to spend time together and hence, the industry is experiencing very high demand across its segments from members who reside within the state, as well as travelling from nearby locations. The bookings for Diwali saw a surge and management is certain it will further increase in the following weekends. During the festivities of Christmas and New Year, top destinations have already been sold out, one of course for the the changed mindset, but also due to the fortunate serendipitous long weekend around the same. While some still do and should scruple over the idea of crowded existence, the fear in many has now been averted; the credit for this confidence built must be given to the organisations who go beyond to ensure the safety and sanitization of guests every step of their journey and experience. While many celebrated in the vicinity of their home comfort even before COVID-19 struck, many continued to celebrate it as flamboyantly as allowed even during the prime of pandemic. The mindsets of individuals over their preference remains the same, however, celebrating festivities with hospitality allows every individual and group to plan and enjoy their special occasion according to their needs, requirements, and comfort.



**Vinod Pandey**

“  
City hotels  
are now a  
prudent choice  
”

collection of tea and coffee. A much-visited favourite of guests for informal engagements and business meetings, Emperor Lounge offers customisable hampers that are thoughtfully curated with festive favourites and delectable flavours. The Art of Gifting at Taj Mahal, New Delhi also offers the joy of memorable experiences at one of the Grand Palaces of Taj. Limited edition luxury merchandise, gourmet delights, handcrafted mithai and chocolates are some of the favourite inclusions of our festive hampers. The trend and mood have been positive and buoyant this festive season. Taj Mahal observed a steady increase in the guests visiting their restaurants for festive dining as well. The queries and orders placed for Diwali hampers had been encouraging and the team had successfully facilitated the same over the last few weeks. With Tajness – A Commitment Restrengthened – the assurance of IHCL's augmented safety and hygiene protocols, they are privileged to be a part of the guests' festive celebrations, states **Satyajeet Krishnan**, Area Director New Delhi and General Manager, Taj Mahal New Delhi.

The demand for exclusive events and memorable destinations are growing. To cater to such demands, Taj Mahal Lucknow recognised the need to be creative and ensure customised services, packages, menus and more under the COVID protocols, mentions **Vinod Pandey**, General Manager, Taj Mahal Lucknow. A small example would be the introduction of packages at the hotel, such as the In-Room Celebration package offering varied options to celebrate in the cosiness of one's room, Unique Dining Experiences where special meal setups are arranged for small groups, the Pet-Friendly Rooms which ensure that one's pet can be a part of the occasion. The Sunday Brunch with live music and extensive counters is also witnessing large turnover every weekend, more so festival weeks.



# Plans for moving ahead

COVID-19 brought the hospitality industry on its knees, says **Manish Dayya**, GM, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & Hyderabad International Convention Centre.



**M**anish Dayya asserts that they restored confidence and revived business during the pandemic by adopting innovative strategies to attract business.

## RECOVERY POST FIRST WAVE

Dayya claims that they have a loyal base of clientele patronising them for over a decade. "We are the first choice for our clients for their meetings, conferences or weddings, which reflected with the rise in business demand from domestic businesses, organising local corporate events, which was just starting to pick up during the first quarter of 2021 just before the 2nd wave hit the country in April," adds Dayya.

## SECOND SETBACK

However, as the country was hit by the harsher second wave of COVID-19, the industry was on the back foot again with most states announcing lockdowns. "Second quarter of the year between April to June was slow due to the peak of the second wave, but July onwards we did see some normalcy with businesses resuming at a slower pace," he claims.

## GETTING BACK IN ACTION

The demand for business was localised within the state due to restrictions on movement between states. Domestic travel by local clients was not recommended to their employees, which had an impact on the meetings business. The Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre, on the other hand, had introduced a home delivery service, which was well-received during the second wave. Vivaah at Novotel was another factor

that favoured them. "Beginning in July 2021, the market in Hyderabad began to show signs of revival, with most hotels reporting decent occupancy levels. "We started seeing higher footfall at all of our restaurants and a few small and mid-sized events as a result of the vaccination push across the country," Dayya explains.

## RECOVERY STRATEGY

They worked on innovative revenue-generating ideas. Apart from weddings and social events, NHCC and HICC is equipped technologically to host hybrid events, as that is the next normal of MICE going forward. They focussed on promoting Leisure at Novotel. "We displayed our landscapes and open areas for active engagement with guests over the weekend," says Dayya.

## DEMAND RETURNING

Apart from staycations or leisure demand, Dayya says, "It is heartening to see the demand for business travellers also getting generated and companies are looking towards the last quarter this year to hold their small business meetings and conferences. With both the IT and corporate sector welcoming fully vaccinated staff members back, we expect some growth towards the business and MICE by the year-end of 2021."

## STATE STATUS

"Telangana has been most forthcoming in terms of supporting tourism in the state and developing more tourist destinations. It is the only state that is encouraging corporations to come back to offices and start reviving economic activity across sectors. Travel to the state of Telangana is also accessible," he adds.



Manish Dayya



**Telangana has been the most proactive in promoting tourism and building new destinations in the state**



# Paving the way

The pandemic has driven us towards a new reality that requires us to take on a greater sense of responsibility for sustainability, says **Siddharth Bhalla**, CEO, Design Source.



**Siddharth Bhalla**

**D**esign Source offers the hospitality, high-end retail, and residential markets in India with affordable, customisable, high-quality art and furniture. We have been in the hospitality industry for 10 years, and our clientele include ibis hotels, Lemon Tree hotels, Sterling Resorts, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Country Inn and Suites, Fairfield Marriott, and Claridges Hotel (New Delhi). In-depth understanding of design, appropriate materials, and the ability to provide a holistic solution at an affordable price are key characteristics that distinguish our business. We have the ability to turn around furniture

state, saving the client both time and money in the completion, transport and installation of the project. Knowing that they are dealing with a team of professionals gives our clients a sense of security and comfort. What they appreciate about Design Source is that we adhere to the deadlines and that we fully understand the client's requirements.

COVID-19 has had a detrimental impact on every sector of the global economy. We have witnessed an upsurge in demand from the residential sector during this period of turmoil. Thankfully, the hospitality industry is making



for 80-150 rooms in 60-90 days. We strive to provide materials and finish solutions that allow us to strike a balance between the design and the client's budget. We have worked on various projects with companies, including Lemon Tree Hotels, Mumbai and Kolkata; Ibis-Mumbai, Hyatt Regency, Pune; Hyatt Centric, Bangalore, and The Claridges, New Delhi, to name a few.

When working on décor projects for hospitality clients, the things we keep in mind are that we look for efficient use of materials, millwork planning so that the product is delivered in a knockdown

a comeback. The pandemic has driven us towards a new reality that requires us to take on a greater sense of responsibility for sustainability. We make every effort to reduce waste when making custom furniture. We have established waste disposal procedures to ensure that waste management is sustainable.

Moving ahead, realising the importance of hygiene and the ease of sanitisation since COVID-19, we want to create furniture that is comfortable and easy to clean. We are also strengthening our workforce to focus on securing projects with hotels, real estate developments, and office buildings. Namrata Rynjah has joined us as a Sales Consultant, who comes with 15 years of experience in the sector. When it comes to custom-made furniture, we are still at a nascent stage. However, given the growth of India's hospitality and real estate sectors, I am confident that we have a lot of room to expand exponentially.



**I am confident that we have a lot of room to expand exponentially**





# Quality at its best!

As one of the oldest global luxury mattress companies, King Koil ensures that the four pillars of quality, purity, design, purpose, and durability are embedded in the DNA of its products.

**C**arrying a brand name has its perks in that it attracts new guests, however, one must ensure that the lineage it carries is maintained. You must ensure that all of your properties provide the same luxurious experience, be it in terms of service, amenities or bedding.

Guests are willing to pay more if their stay is pleasant and therapeutic, which begins with a good night's sleep. As a result, we, at King Koil, make certain that your guests have the most luxurious and comfortable sleep possible while staying at your property.

**King Koil:** Handcrafting quality mattresses since 1898 for the best sleeping experience, globally. We make sure that the four pillars of quality, purity, design, purpose and durability, are in the DNA of our products as one of the oldest global premium mattress brands. It must pass through the stringent quality checks used by King Koil US to ensure that the quality criteria are met.

**Purity:** It all starts with the materials used to make it comfortable and durable, such as 100 per cent pure sleep-grade foam or double-heated tempered steel innerspring systems.

**Design:** The design should serve its purpose that is why the construction of the mattress is the most important factor in making it comfortable and supportive.

**Purpose:** Be it the thickness, fire retardant fabric, edge support, the density of foam or the count of springs, everything that is used is to make sure that it serves its purpose, i.e., offering the best sleep to your guests.

**Durability:** Using 100 per cent pure foam, higher spring counts, high GSM fabric or something as small as a glueing agent, we make sure that King Koil mattresses are made durable and come with 10 years warranty.

When you see the guests leaving happily and joyfully, you feel proud and honoured that your investment in the quality and the brand is paying its return.

Get in touch, to talk to your King Koil representative or visit us at [www.kingkoil.in/hospitality](http://www.kingkoil.in/hospitality).



**Guests are willing to pay more if their stay is pleasant and therapeutic**



## Orange Tree introduces coffee tables

◆ Orange Tree has launched an exquisite collection of coffee tables that are high on versatility and functionality. With its ethos rooted in sustainability, Orange Tree seamlessly blends artistry with modern engineering in their latest ensemble of multifunctional coffee tables crafted using a combination of wood, marble, black metal pieces, and jade crystal. The latest offering reflects the brand's vision while maintaining the essentiality of coffee tables. Each piece, meticulously handmade by a team of artisans, comes with a clean design, additional countertop space, storage, and distinct names that can make your living cosy and intimate.



## Ethereal furniture

◆ If you yearn to transform your spaces into a palatial abode reminiscent of the medieval eras or the European countryside castles, Rosabagh's ethereal collection of sofas, tables and accent chairs are right up your alley. A brand renowned for its extravagant aesthetics that stretches the boundaries of art, engineering to create timeless and bespoke furniture, Rosabagh's accent pieces are made in all teak and oak wood with intricate and visually appealing champagne leafing.

## Oorjaa's lamp collection

◆ The lyrical folds, the aesthetic shapes, the natural forms, and arresting designs are at the heart of Oorjaa's collection of handmade lamps made with a banana fibre. Oorjaa is known for using banana fibers, urban waste, and other waste materials to create designs that are a symbol of ingenuity and sustainability. From contemporary to traditional to bohemian, the collection is an ensemble of timeless, eclectic, often minimalist designs comprising table and ceiling lamps, and pendant lights.





# Morpho Hotels debuts in USA

Morpho Hotels India takes the first step towards expanding in select global markets via owned and managed assets by founding Morpho Hotels and Resorts USA LLC in New York.

**M**orpho Hotels and Resorts India Pvt. Ltd., based in India, has founded Morpho Hotels and Resorts USA LLC in New York, in partnership with Upjeet Singh Sahota. With the acquisition of the Rodeway Inn, a Choice Hotel in Holdrege, Nebraska, Morpho Hotels has taken the first step toward their vision of expanding in the US and select strategic international markets via owned and managed assets.

**Dipinder Benjamin**, Founder & CEO, Morpho Hotels and Resorts, says, "We intend to build an intimate chain of world-class smart hotels with a razor sharp focus on yield management and profit optimisation. Customised technology is our greatest tool. Our expansion plans continue to be robust through multiple routes of investments, management contracts and branding of mid-market hotels across GCC, Indian Ocean and Europe."

**Upjeet Singh Sahota**, Director of Operational



Excellence and Business Development, India and Overseas, Morpho Hotels and Resorts, asserts, "Our aim through this acquisition with 100 per cent equity is to take Morpho Hotels and Resorts to the next stage of hotel development and ownership. We will also augment our endeavours with managed hotels in USA and other strategic international markets. Our focus is to build confidence with prospective owners and partners to achieve success together."



**We intend to build an intimate chain of world-class smart hotels**

## Remodel with Dezenzia

Uniforms Unlimited's team proves that change is the only constant by consistently upgrading and improving designs, fabrics and techniques.

**O**ver the years the concept of uniform has evolved from basic, dull and bland attire to trendy chic work wear. Designer uniforms are huge vehicles of branding for the company as well as a matter of pride for the employee.

**Zubin Mehta**, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Uniforms Unlimited, is aiming at global expansion. His focus on research, market study, innovation and consumer orientation ensures every delivery exceeds expectations.

He is one such designer who believes that 'a stylish yet practical uniform enhances value and unifies the complete experience of hospitality'.

He has a holistic approach towards designing, which blends richness in cultures and offers



finely-styled uniforms, which are practical as well as elaborate enough to bring instant connectivity with the destination where the hotels/resorts are located.

Change is the only constant, and the team of Uniforms Unlimited demonstrates this by constantly upgrading and innovating designs, fabrics and techniques.

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**Designer uniforms are huge vehicles of branding for the company**



# Organic recycling

Through the use of thermophilic bacteria and a fully automated composting system, ECOLEEN assists in the conversion of wet organic waste to compost.



**Dr. Shekhar C Jindal**

**W**e 'SYNERGIA MÉTIER PVT. LTD.' are the manufacturers of 'automatic composting machines' for treatment of organic waste from kitchens, gardens etc., under the brand name ECOLEEN.

The basic principle applied is the use of thermophilic bacteria to convert the organic waste to compost through fully automatic composting machine.

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1. It can convert organic waste to compost within 24 hours (under ideal set of conditions).
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5. It is a computerised and user-friendly machine.
6. The compact designing of the machine has reduced the space occupied by the installed machine.
7. Compost formed is rich in different nutrients, in line with FPO standards.

8. If handled properly, following do's and don'ts, and kept maintained and clean, the machine can work efficiently for years together.

We, Synergia Metier Pvt Ltd., are an ISO 9001:2015 certified, QCI-verified GeM registered company engaged in manufacturing of composting machines. We also bagged 'The Best Innovation' Award from Sh. Manpreet Badal, Minister of Finance, Punjab.

ECOLEEN helps in converting the wet organic waste to compost and is successfully used in hotels, canteens, restaurants, home-stays, at any and every site, housing societies, kitchen, malls and theatres, municipalities, offices, hospitals, school and colleges, and likewise, where there is a generation of organic waste.

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**Compost formed is rich in different nutrients as per FPO standards**





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# Appointments



## HEMANT MEDIRATTA

Chief Advisor, International Leisure  
The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts

★ Hemant has been pursuing an entrepreneurial career as Co-Founder of a sales and marketing organisation catering to global ultra-luxury and premium brands after completing an exceptional 16-year tenure with The Oberoi Group. He will lead the global leisure strategy, and mentor and guide the travel trade team and International Sales Offices at The Leela in his role as Chief Advisor. He is a seasoned professional with experience across hotel operations and sales and marketing in both domestic and international markets.



## SANDEEP BASU

Corporate General Manager  
Cygnett Hotels & Resorts Pvt. Ltd.

★ Basu has been promoted to the role of Corporate General Manager, Pre Opening and Operations. He will be vital in achieving Cygnett's ambitious growth goals. The launch and lunch of Cygnett Park BL in Jaipur will be his first project in his new role. He brings with him an impressive track record of over two decades in the hospitality sector, having worked for companies such as Park Hotels, ITC Hotels, Hyatt, and Sheraton. An articulate and passionate hotelier with a great business acumen.



## DEEPAK KUMAR

General Manager,  
Hilton Mumbai International Airport

★ Deepak has been appointed as GM of Hilton Mumbai International Airport. He brings 20+ years of expertise across a variety of hotels and brands. His last role was as GM, Holiday Inn Cochin. Prior to working at the Holiday Inn in Cochin, he spent nearly a decade with IHG at the Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport and Holiday Inn New Delhi International Airport. He has also obtained IIMA's Six Sigma Certification and Strategic Management Certification as a hotel and marketing management graduate.



## MOHAMMED ZULFIKAR

General Manager  
Southern Star Hassan, Karnataka

★ Zulfikar was awarded bachelor's degree in Hotel Administration by Mangalore University. He then went on to do his Masters in Tourism Management after his postgraduate in Marketing Management at Bangalore University. In India, he is a qualified trainer for HACCP programmes. He has nearly two decades of culinary and tourism experience. He was the Training Manager, Sarovar Group of Hotels, Chennai and Principal, Vidya Vikas IHM, Mysore. He also worked for the DNATA in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in 2004.



## AMIT KUMAR THAKUR

General Manager  
Pilibhit House, IHCL SeleQtions

★ He comes with over two decades of remarkable experience in luxury hospitality. During the hotel's pre-opening stage, he took over the role of GM and was in charge of operations for Pilibhit House, IHCL SeleQtions. He joined Pilibhit House with a wealth of experience leading and training teams at premium hotels and resorts. He has completed the Taj Leadership Development Program in Goa, Chennai, and Hyderabad, as well as achieving certification as a Hygiene and Safety Champion.



## AKSHAY BHARDWAJ

Head Chef  
Andaz Delhi

★ In July 2008, he began his career in the hospitality industry with ISTA five-star luxury hotels (now Hyatt). He did culinary internships at the Le Chatelain Hotel in Brussels, Wildflower Hall (Oberoi Resort) in Shimla, Hotel Vatel in Nimes, France, and Le Bateau Ivre under celebrity chef Jean Pierre Jacob. As Demi Chef de Partie, he joined Oceania Cruises, an upper-end cruise line, in 2011. He travelled to India in 2012 to work as a Chef de Partie for Pullman Hotels, after which he moved to Canada in April 2013 to work as a Chef de Partie for Sawridge Hotels Alberta.



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