

# HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA

# fhrai magazine

Vol 22, Issue 06, June 2022

Pages 44 ₹50

A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE  
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## HOTELS CHEER high summer ADRs



75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav

## TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL



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#### Event Highlights

eZee participated in South Asia's Largest Travel & Tourism Exchange this year.

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**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**

Vice President  
FHRAI

**We welcome the suggestion of establishing a law on service charges since it would then have to encompass any other differently labelled charges levied by other industries and platforms**

## *My Dear Members,*

**A**s we go further into the year, we are encouraged to see the industry picking itself up encouragingly. We are also thankful to the Union as well as various state governments for not going into panic mode as earlier and ordering further clampdowns in anticipation of the so-called fourth wave. But we must be careful and take abundant precautions to prevent what may even be labeled as a common cold.

FHRAI met with the dynamic G Kisan Reddyji, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development of the North East in Delhi and in Mumbai to present proposals for the revival of the hospitality sector, including holding food festivals in conjunction with MoT to mark *Azadi Ka Amrit Mohatsav*.

The minister was apprised of the prevalent situation and the issues faced by the industry, and proposals were exchanged and discussed. Awarding infrastructure/industry status to hospitality was also discussed, amongst other pressing issues.

I request all establishments to support the *Azadi Ka Amrit Mohatsav* by MoT and display the logo prominently at their establishments. The logo, for example, can be used on all stationary, as prominently placed standees within the premises, and on the bill, to name a few examples. The hi-res images of the logo for the event are available at the FHRAI office if required.

We have been constantly appraising the government regarding industry's issues, OTAs and FSAs, viz., the monopoly of OTAs and FSAs. We are thankful to the government for launching the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC). While applauding the government and the DPIIT for successfully launching the ONDC pilot phase in five Indian cities, we have requested a similar platform for

the hospitality industry in our letter to Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Textiles, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and to Nandan Mohan Nilekani, ONDC Advisory Council Member.

In a meeting with the Department of Consumer Affairs, we have submitted an official response to all of the issues voiced on the subject of restaurant service charges, which were wrongly being labelled as an unfair trade practice. Even across the globe, levying such charges is a general and accepted practice.

We welcome the suggestion of establishing a law on this since it would then have to encompass any other differently labelled charges levied by other industries and platforms. None of the other charges are as transparent or fully refundable if the guest chooses not to avail of them, as the SC charged by the industry.

I am extremely proud to announce that on May 20, 2022, your institute, the FHRAI-IHM in Greater Noida, has completed its academic year. The institute held an Annual Day function with cultural events organised by students to commemorate the milestone.

My personal congratulations to AK Singh and the entire FHRAI-IHM team for working relentlessly in the toughest period the industry has ever seen.

While the regions are getting back to planning and organising their regional conventions, FHRAI is also gearing up to plan a national convention, details of which will be released upon finalisation.

*With kind regards,*

**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**

Vice President, FHRAI

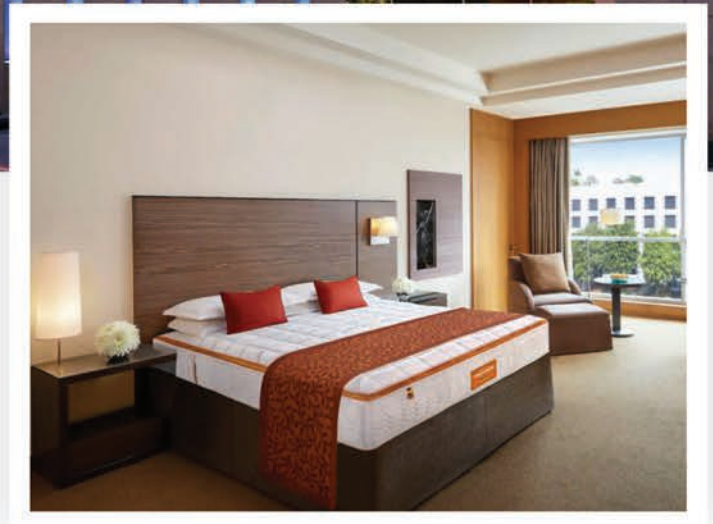


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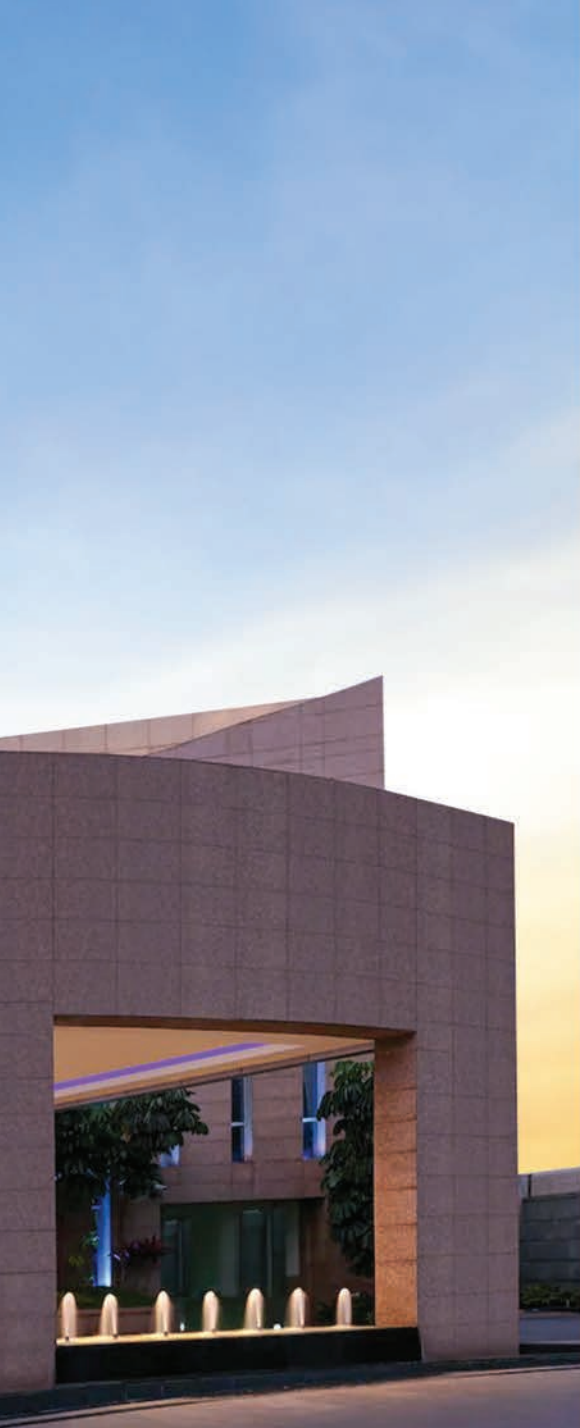
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## JUNE 2022

### INDUSTRY RATES FINALLY A REALITY FOR MAHA HOTELS

Maharashtra government takes first step towards bringing non-classified hotels under the purview of 'industry status' by forming a committee to oversee certification process.

COVER IMAGE:  
FHRAI



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### FEATURES

#### FROM SERVICE TO INDUSTRY STATUS: STRIDE AHEAD

Regional heads highlight how, like all other industries, hospitality needs industry-specific aid from government to recover from its losses, leading to lower operational expenses.

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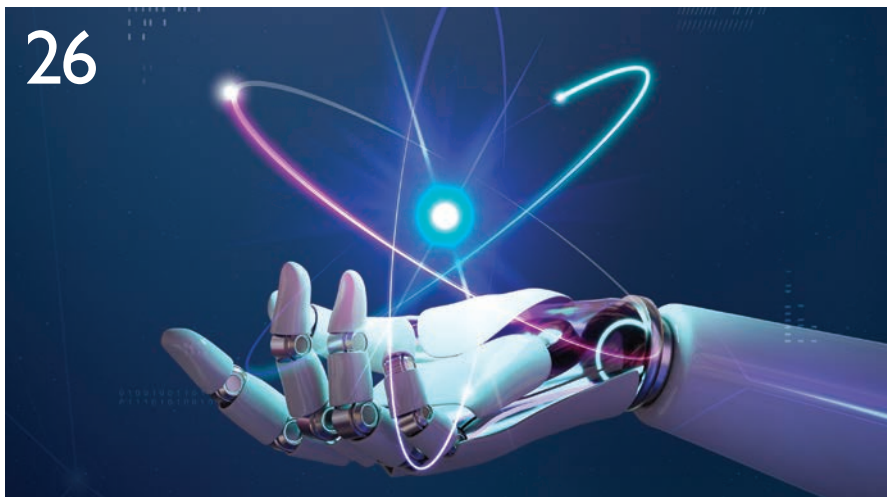
As MoT and stakeholders step up their efforts of providing impetus to the industry, Executive Committee emphasises significance of food tourism in promoting destination.



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# Expanding growth horizons

FHRAI presents proposals to tourism minister for revival of hospitality sector, including initiative to host food festivals in conjunction with MoT to mark *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*.

**G**Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development of the North-Eastern Region, has received a submission from the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) with proposals for the restoration and growth of the hospitality industry.

Some of the recommendations were:

- Making tourism a national priority sector
- Giving hospitality infrastructure status, better credit facilities, subsidies and incentives
- GST rationalisation
- Continuation of the EPCG scheme
- Favourable liquor licence policies
- The need for a platform similar to the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) for the hospitality industry

With the cooperation of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), FHRAI and its regional associations have suggested conducting



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI

**“We are proposing that FHRAI, with the support of MoT, would like to host 75 regional cuisines in each of the food festivals”**

food festivals around the country as part of *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*.

“With the pandemic restrictions being eased slowly across the country, people are eager to socialise. The future of culinary tourism is bright in India. People are ready to experiment with different cuisines to try out good food, and it is the right time to take initiatives that can promote tourism in the country,” says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

Speaking on *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*, Kohli further says, “To commemorate 75 years of Indian Independence, we are proposing that FHRAI and its regional associations, with the support of the MoT, would like to host 75 regional cuisines in each of the food festivals.”

India’s tourism sector is one of the largest service industries with 10.93 million foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) and US \$30 billion in foreign exchange earnings in 2019. The



sector has been adversely impacted by the pandemic in the last two years, which affected roughly 60 to 70 per cent of its overall revenue.

Tourism is one of the important industries in the country that accounts for around 10 per cent of GDP and employs roughly 90 million people. The tourism and hospitality industries in India have the potential to be key drivers for the socioeconomic development of the country.

"To achieve this, tourism should be declared as a priority sector in the country with special incentives and benefits to help the sector attain its true potential. As a result, in the region's rapidly expanding tourism market, it is even more critical to implement exclusive and comprehensive incentive and policy measures to make the sector more competitive," adds Kohli.

According to the association, hotels that are capital-intensive require large investments and have a long gestation period.



**Pradeep Shetty**  
Jt. Hon. Sec., FHRAI

**Awarding of infrastructure status will allow hotels to obtain term loans with longer repayment terms of 15 or even 25 years**

sectors such as roads, railways, and ports, and will also make statutory utilities such as electricity available to the sector at industrial rates rather than commercial rates," says **Pradeep Shetty**, Joint Honorary Secretary, FHRAI.

According to a recent analysis by ICRA Limited, 74 per cent of hospitality businesses have negative credit profiles and are at risk of being downgraded as a result of the COVID-19's impact.

Tourism and hospitality were among the earliest and worst-affected industries as a result of the pandemic, with three waves impeding recovery.

It is imperative that the hospitality sector should be extended with better credit facilities to help it survive and get ready for a big leap when finally normalcy resumes. Because of their vulnerabilities, large capital investments, and high operational costs, the tourism and hospitality industries are in desperate need of long-term credit facilities.



Mid-market and budget hotel projects are typically developed for less than ₹200 crore and have a seven to eight-year payback period. High bank interest rates, on the other hand, deter investment in the sector.

"The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recognised hotels as a sub-sector of social infrastructure. The infrastructure status was granted to hotel projects above ₹200 crore. This threshold has to be brought down to ₹10 crore per hotel to give a fillip to budget segment hotels. The awarding of infrastructure status will allow hotels to obtain term loans with longer repayment terms of 15 or even 25 years, similar to other

Access to soft funding and longer periods to repay loans will make hotel investments more attractive and sustainable. It is also important that investment subsidies and tax holidays are granted for investments in tourism projects implemented in the country.

"This will further augment the growth of tourism and hospitality exponentially. For developers setting up tourism projects in tier 2 and 3 cities and remote locations, tax incentives should be provided to promote tourism in such parts of the country. Industrial subsidies given to other sectors should be extended to the sector as well," concludes Shetty.



# ‘Suspend OYO's IPO process’

FHRAI has petitioned SEBI to cancel OYO's IPO due to gross irregularities, fraudulent dealings, and massive losses despite being one of the most promising startups.

**F**HRAI has once again urged Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to cancel OYO's initial public offering (IPO), citing the hotel room aggregator's enormous losses in previous years. As per reports, OYO lost ₹3,943.84 crore in FY2020-21, which translates to a loss of roughly ₹76,077 every minute. Since its inception in 2013, OYO has been losing money, and its overall revenue has dropped by 69 per cent, from ₹13,413 crore in 2020 to ₹4,157 crore in 2021. The FHRAI has cautioned that the OYO's IPO will only deplete public wealth while rewarding the company's founders and top executives. FHRAI had previously raised concerns about egregious inaccuracies and inadequate disclosures in OYO's Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP).

"In addition to engaging in anti-competitive business practices, OYO is a company that has consistently registered losses since its inception. It may have raised a lot of money to become touted as one of India's most promising start-ups, but it has not done enough to manage business on the ground as efficiently. OYO has one of the highest ESOP pools of US \$1.1 billion, which is absurd. In addition to its financial complications and losses, the company is being investigated for anti-competitive practices by CCI. The



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI

**OYO may have raised a lot of money but it has not done enough to manage business on the ground as efficiently**

hospitality industry is concerned about OYO, and FHRAI, as its representative, wants to warn the public and urge the SEBI to cancel its IPO," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

FHRAI has already filed a complaint with the



**Pradeep Shetty**  
Jt. Hon. Sec., FHRAI

**OYO has been under-reporting revenues generated from hotels and has also been evading taxes**

SEBI stating tax evasion by OYO. OYO and its subsidiaries were charged with GST/service tax evasion by the Directorate General of GST Investigation (DGGI).

"OYO has been deliberately suppressing sales figures. It has been under-reporting revenues generated from hotels and has also been evading taxes. There are several OYO partner hotels across the country and globe that have also reported the same. The company has been soliciting a large number of bookings at competitive prices of less than ₹1,000 per booking, which as per the rate slab does not attract any GST. However, OYO generates a supplementary invoice under the tab 'convenience fee' in addition to the booking invoice and conveniently evades tax," says **Pradeep Shetty**, Jt. Hon. Sec., FHRAI.

FHRAI further noted that a number of FIRs against OYO had been filed under Sections 420, 406, and 409 of the IPC, some of which are grave economic offences punishable by life imprisonment. "We request the SEBI to suspend the IPO process to protect the interests of all stakeholders as well as the general public," concludes Kohli.





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# ‘A revolutionary step’

FHRAI applauded the government and the DPIIT for successfully launching the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) pilot phase in five Indian cities.

**F**HRAI expects ONDC to change the dynamics of the country's online retail market, describing the initiative as a revolutionary step in the larger interest of the country's retail ecosystem. FHRAI has requested a similar platform for the hospitality industry in a letter to Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Textiles, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, and Nandan Mohan Nilekani, ONDC Advisory Council Member, to ensure a level playing field and break the monopoly of OTAs and FSAs.

"Like the retail players, the hospitality industry too is presently aggrieved by a few OTAs and FSAs. Introducing a platform such as ONDC to the hospitality industry will be a big game changer. It will ensure a mechanism to protect the interests of hotels and restaurants across the country against the predatory pricing and anti-competitive tactics of OTAs as well as



**Pradeep Shetty**  
Jt. Hon. Sec., FHRAI



**Platforms such as ONDC will greatly benefit millions of customers with better deals**

FSAs. Needless to say, it will immensely benefit millions of our customers with better deals and a better customer experience," observes **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

"The major issues the hospitality industry faces from these agencies range from charging high rates of commissions, over commitment to customers, deep discounting, unreasonable additional charges, breach of agreements, default of payments, and over and under booking of the rooms, to name a few. These agencies have created a hostile environment for the industry and customers too face problems of non-fulfilment of prior commitments coupled with almost zero complaint redressal mechanisms. A platform such as ONDC will benefit millions of customers with better deals and customer experience," concludes **Pradeep Shetty**, Jt. Hon. Sec., FHRAI.

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# Celebrating excellence

After a successful academic year, FHRAI-IHM celebrates its annual day. 'Insperia,' a magazine dedicated to hospitality education, was also launched at the event.

**I**n 20 May 2022, FHRAI-IHM, Greater Noida, completed its academic year. The institute held an Annual Day function with cultural events organised by students to commemorate the milestone. The evening's chief guest, Vinod Gulati, a member of FHRAI's Executive Committee, inaugurated the first issue of FHRAI-IHM's hospitality education magazine, 'Insperia.' The guest of honour was Rishabh Tandon, Area Director, Human Resources, Intercontinental Hotels Group. The function was attended by eminent dignitaries such as Satveer Singh, Director (Studies), NCHMCT; Rajeev Malhotra, Former Principal, IHM; TK Razdan, Hospitality Skill Trainer; Aswani Kumar, Asst. Director, NCHMCT; Jaison Chacko, Secretary General, FHRAI; and Arun Kumar Singh, Director, FHRAI-IHM.

"FHRAI-IHM completed its first academic year since its affiliation with NCHMCT, and this is a milestone for us. When we look back at the last two years, being



**“Institute and entire team persevered to eventually complete the year seamlessly. I congratulate all our students”**

able to complete an academic year having conducted physical classes and practicals is itself an achievement. The pandemic impacted student enrolments. But the institute and the entire team persevered to eventually complete the year seamlessly. I congratulate all our students on the completion of their academic year and wish them all the very best for their future,” says **AK Singh**, Director, FHRAI-IHM.



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# ‘Not unfair trade practice’

In a meeting with the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), FHRAI submitted an official response to all of the issues voiced on the subject of restaurant service charges.

**F**HRAI maintained its position, stating that a restaurant collecting a service charge is not illegal nor in breach of the law since it is like any other charge collected by an establishment and that it is a part of the restaurant's invitation to potential consumers. Customers must determine whether or not they want to patronise the restaurant. DoCA said that they could gather a holistic view on the subject from different stakeholders and, after analysing all the aspects, they may formulate a policy if required.



**Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**  
Vice President, FHRAI

"A service charge is meant for the benefit of the staff, and so, some establishments make a conscious choice to adopt a policy beneficial towards their staff," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.

Concerns about the lack of transparency in adding a service charge to a bill were addressed by FHRAI, which stated that the charge is disclosed in advance and is clearly listed as a charge, not a tax, as a distinct



**Levying service charges is a general practice across the globe**



heading in the bill. As a result, the amount, rate, and purpose of the charge are all completely transparent. "Unlike many other service providers that charge customers



under the guise of convenience fees, airport charges, or usage fees, restaurants act fairly and clearly mention the amount being paid and its purpose. There is nothing hidden or deceptive about it. We have advised our members that in the event they choose to collect service charges, they must state the same clearly on their menu itself," says **Pradeep Shetty**, Jt. Hon. Sec., FHRAI.

## Paving way for quality

FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management (FHRAI-IHM) has announced student scholarship programme for B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration.

**T**he scholarship programme for students interested in pursuing a three-year B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration. Children of FHRAI member establishments and will be eligible for a 50 per cent tuition fee waiver based on merit and on a first-



**FHRAI is making efforts to offer world-class hospitality education**



come, first-served basis. It was announced with the goal of providing students world-class education and increasing the availability of quality manpower for the industry by making education from India's leading hospitality management institute more affordable. "Today, the industry faces a dual challenge with an eroding number of candidates pursuing hospitality education and a higher attrition rate in employment. One of FHRAI's stated objectives is to run institutes to provide education and training, both formal and job-oriented, in the fields of hospitality management, technology, and professional education to meet the requirements of India's hospitality, tourism, and allied industries," says **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, Vice President, FHRAI.





# Pushing frontiers of growth

Senior HRAWI delegates met with G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture, and Development of the North-Eastern Region in Mumbai, on his visit to the city.

The delegation gave the minister a wishlist for the industry, citing issues and proposals for its revival and growth. HRAWI was represented by Sherry Bhatia, President; Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, VP, FHRAI; Pradeep Shetty, Sr. VP; Paramjit Ghai, Jt. Hon. Sec.; Sandeep Talaulicar, EC Member; Punish Sharma, The Fern Hotels & Resorts; SP Jain, Pride Group of Hotels; and Kunal Gujral, SG. "We have requested the minister to consider making tourism a national priority sector. We have also proposed organising food festivals across the region. He suggested that the industry participate in CSR activities that aid in the maintenance and preservation of historical places. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has been requested to prepare a report, and HRAWI has accepted the proposal," says **Sherry Bhatia**, President, HRAWI. FHRAI has also



**Sherry Bhatia**  
President, HRAWI

**Tourism should be made a national priority sector**

urged Reddy to consider giving hotels infrastructure status, better credit facilities, investment subsidies, and tax breaks for tourism projects.



"We have urged that the 18 per cent GST category for hotels above room rates of ₹7,500 be annulled and merged with 12 per cent GST category. Restaurants should be allowed to avail the option to either charge a composite GST at 5 per cent with no ITC or charge GST at 12 per cent with full ITC and that the rate be delinked from any room tariffs," says **Pradeep Shetty**, Sr. VP, HRAWI.

**HRAWI**



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# Swinging into strong action

As pandemic has subsided in recent months, SIHRA has stepped up its efforts to enable region's recovery and growth by holding meetings and discussions with govt. officials.

**Q** On 10 May 2022, an FHRAI delegation met with G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture, and Development of the North Eastern Region of India.

The delegation, headed by Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, FHRAI, included office bearers and prominent members of the association, viz., K Syama Raju, President, SIHRA; DVS Somaraju, Honorary Treasurer, FHRAI; Surendra Jaiswal, President, HRANI; Sherry Bhatia, President, HRAWI; and Jaison Chacko, Secretary General, FHRAI.

## MEETING WITH RK ROJA

SIHRA President K Syama Raju and VP Balakrishna Reddy met RK Roja, Minister for Tourism, Culture, and Youth Advancement, Government of Andhra Pradesh, in Tirupati, and invited her to the upcoming SIHRA Convention in Bengaluru.

The minister agreed to attend the convention. They also had a detailed discussion about boosting AP tourism and fostering synergy across the southern states.



**K Syama Raju**  
President, SIHRA



**SIHRA with TNSDC to provide skills to harness the power of youth in tourism & hospitality**

## SIHRA AS A TRAINING PARTNER

TNSDC is the Tamil Nadu government's state nodal agency for skill development. It was formed with the vision of transforming the state



into a skill hub by skilling the youth to enhance their employability and match the expectations of the industry, and it functions as a corporation under the Labour and Employment Department. TNSDC has approved SIHRA as a Green Channel Training Partner. SIHRA will collaborate with TNSDC to provide employable skills in order to harness the power of youth in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

## DUES FROM TN GOVERNMENT TO HOTELIERS

Due to consistent follow-up with the concerned officials and Radhakrishnan, Health Secretary, Government of Tamil Nadu, bills pertaining to food and accommodation provided by hoteliers to doctors and paramedics during COVID-19, amounting to ₹20 crore, are expected to be cleared by the end of June 2022. Due to technical issues, unpaid bills of ₹44 crore will be settled in the next two months. The government will only settle debts received on or before 31 May 2022.

## MEETING IN CHENNAI

On 1 June 2022, the Southern Regional Office of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, hosted a tourism stakeholders' meeting in Chennai to discuss informally the measures and activities to be carried out for the development of tourism in Tamil Nadu. Sundar Singaram, Director of Operations, SIHRA, participated in the event at the invitation of the Tourism Ministry, Southern Region, representing the association.

**SIHRA**





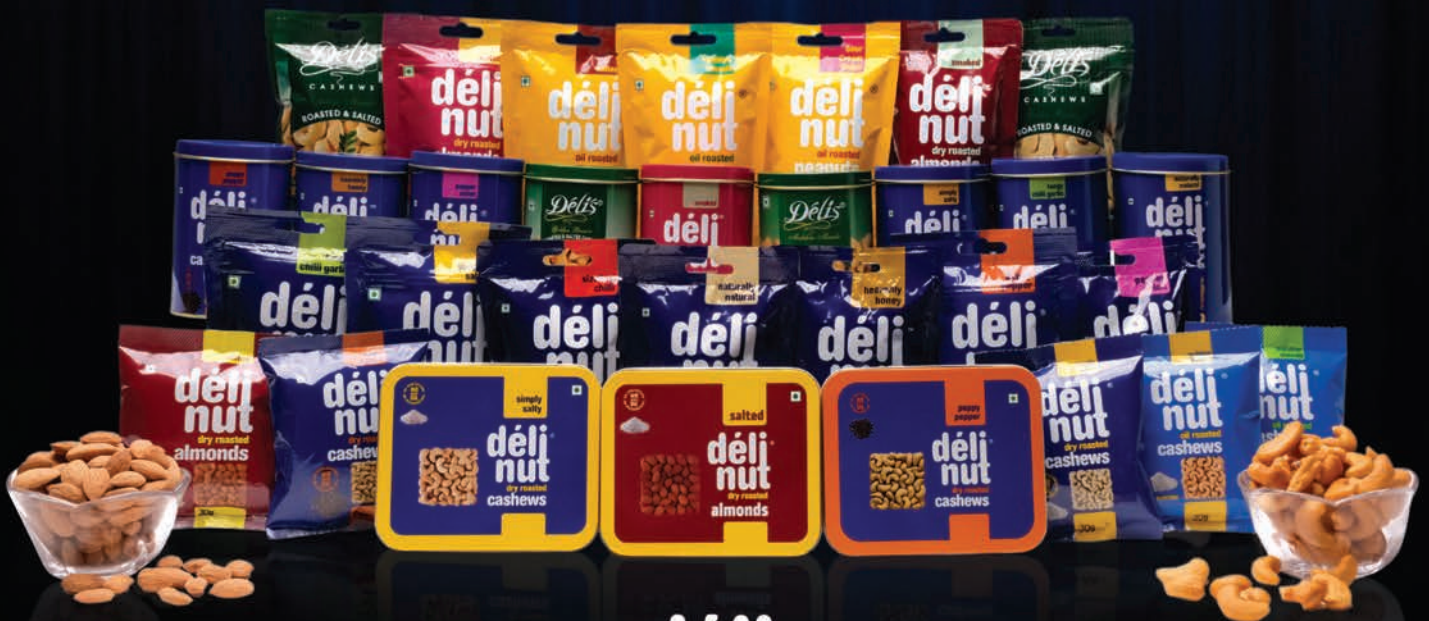
# The apt addition to your mini-bar

Delinut is a pioneer of dry roasting in India with trust earned over 4 generations in the food industry. Using our proprietary FOST technology, our roasting process ensures the fresh, crisp and full-bodied taste of nuts which is 100% free from oil and preservatives. We have a wide variety of nuts and flavours including roasted and plain cashews, almonds, peanuts, pistachios, mixed nuts and trail mixes.

All our current flavours are made from natural sources.

We can provide customized OEM solutions to cater to your needs perfectly from our BRC certified factories.

Our ever growing client portfolio includes  
Major domestic airlines, International hotel chains,  
Major coffee shop chains and blue - chip companies.  
We welcome you to be a part of our esteemed clientele



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Kollam 691001, Kerala, India





# Satisfying the nut purists

India Food Export has pioneered the dry roasting technique, ensuring a fresh and crunchy bite while still maintaining the wholesome flavour of the nut and ingredients.

**O**ur focus is on delivering the very best premium quality nut products. Our dedicated team of hard-working professionals ensures that no corners are cut when it comes to delivering the best quality products. We can confidently state that we have been literally handpicking each of the raw nuts we process to preserve the finest of quality standards. Our unwavering commitment to quality has earned us BRC certification for our manufacturing facilities. In an industry where oil roasting is the norm, we pioneered the dry roasting technique where the nut is roasted without the presence of any oil or preservatives, while

still maintaining the wholesome flavour of the nut and ingredients. All our ingredients are from 100 per cent natural sources. We aim to bring quality nut products to the mainstream to satisfy the nut purists as well as the snacking crowd.

## FAST-MOVING PRODUCTS

Our highest selling product is mainly dependent on the marketplace demographic. Chilli garlic is a popular flavour among dry roasted aficionados. Our 'Simply Salty' belies its name and brings out the subtlest flavours of the cashew nut. Our honey roasted is also a must try. Golden Brown is our best seller

## THE REACH

Our products are available in most major marketplaces in South India. We are also OEM suppliers to major blue-chip companies, such as Indigo, GoAir, Tata Starbucks, Barista, Tata Trent, HMS Host, Taj Sats, Travel Foods, Anand Sweets, Four Seasons Resorts Maldives, and Heineken, with many more partnerships in the works. We also have a nationwide presence in the e-commerce segment. Orders may be placed on our website, [delinutshop.com](http://delinutshop.com). Our plant is located in the Nagercoil district of Tamil Nadu. We plan to expand our operations in the region.



**Our highest selling product is mainly dependent on the marketplace demographic**

in the oil roasted category. Another popular flavour in this category is Malabar Masala. When it comes to our almond offerings, our smoked almond flavour is widely acclaimed and a crowd favourite. We use jumbo W240 grade cashews, which immediately makes our product stand out due to its large size. Our mastery of dry roasting also ensures a fresh and crunchy bite to our cashews and nuts.

## NEW LAUNCHES

We have a few planned products in the pipeline for imminent launch, such as trail mixes and mixed nuts. We also have products that are still in the 'lab' phase. When it comes to launching a new product, our philosophy is to capture a current trend and deliver the best, world-class quality in a premium product.

## VISION FOR THE BRAND

Our vision is to see our brand become a household name in the nuts and dry fruits industry in India. We plan to expand our presence on a pan-India basis.

ADVERTORIAL







**FHRAI Institute of Hospitality Management**  
**(An initiative of The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant**  
**Associations of India)**



**Affiliated To NCHMCT, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. Of India**

**An Initiative of**  
**FHRAI**

**CONTACT US**

**NOW**

**Apply today**  
**to confirm**  
**the seat**

## **FHRAI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS**

- ☒ **50% Scholarship in Tuition Fee for students for B. Sc. in Hospitality & Hotel Administration from the FHRAI-IHM, Greeter Noida**
- ☒ **Children of FHRAI / Regional Association members and their employees are eligible**
- ☒ **Institute Highlights**
  - **7-Acre Campus**
  - **State-Of-The-Art Labs,**
  - **Experienced Faculty,**
  - **100% Placement Assistance, Separate Hostel for Boys & Girls**

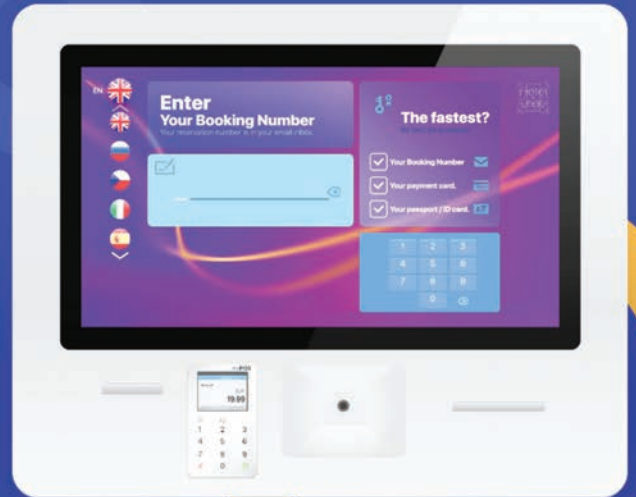


**7503023330 / 011 40780724, Mr. Abhishek Kumar, ASG, FHRAI**

# Revolutionising front-desk operations

## eZee Tap

HOTEL SELF CHECK-IN  
KIOSK



eZee at SATTE 2022 has launched a hotel self-check-in kiosk, eZee Tap, which is touted as a modern way to handle front-office operations designed to consider the frequently changing travel behaviours.

**A** leading player in the hospitality solutions space, eZee Technosys (hereinafter eZee), recently added another technology to its suite—a self-service hotel kiosk, eZee Tap, at the 29th edition of South Asia's Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE).

The company's all-new kiosk, along with an array of hospitality technology solutions, attracted various thought leaders and stakeholders in the industry at SATTE 2022.

Furthermore, it beefed up interactive sessions around the company's end-to-end solutions and how they are revolutionising the industry. eZee Tap is a one-of-its-kind self-service kiosk for hotels. It is designed to consider the frequently changing travel behaviours.

Travellers nowadays seek flexibility and freedom, and that is exactly what eZee Tap offers. From choosing a language, making payment, scanning IDs, to getting the room key, eZee Tap helps guests with everything within minutes and without any hassle.

Expressing his thoughts on the launch of eZee Tap, **Aeijaz Sodawala**, Chief



**Aeijaz Sodawala**



**With eZee Tap's launch, we are empowering accommodation businesses with value-added solutions**

Executive Officer of eZee Technosys, said, "Look at the dynamics of this industry. It keeps on evolving. And to keep abreast, hotel operators need something powerful

and feature-rich. With the launch of eZee Tap, we are empowering accommodation businesses with solutions that add value to their lives."

The eZee team at SATTE had one-on-one floor interactions with multiple associates/partners, potential and existing clients, and several other visitors.

Furthermore, many accommodation businesses have shown interest in the kiosk and are keen to deploy it on their property.

"SATTE indeed provided us a platform where we could spread the word about eZee Tap to a wider audience. Additionally, the event was a major epicentre for discussions and dialogues on the growth of the industry," Sodawala added.

eZee has always been at the forefront when it comes to building top-notch hospitality solutions.

And, with the latest addition of eZee Tap to its stack, the company is looking forward to offering contactless services for accommodation businesses worldwide.



# Industry rates finally a reality for Maharashtra hotels

Maharashtra government takes first step towards bringing non-classified hotels under the purview of 'industry status' by forming a committee to oversee certification process.



Lipla Negi

**I**n a move to bolster the hospitality sector in the state, the Maharashtra government has now begun an official procedure for non-classified hotels to avail industrial concessions. Under this procedure, the Maharashtra Tourism expert committee will inspect the hotels and assess them on a number of criteria set by the government. The hotels can submit their applications for an inspection by the expert committee, and upon fulfilling the criteria set by the state government's committee, can qualify for industrial concessions. While the government resolution (GR) on this was issued last year, the committee is now actively inviting applications from non-classified hotels across the state to qualify for available taxes and charges at industrial rates. Speaking about the process for accreditation, **Dr. Dhananjay D Sawalkar**, Jt. Director, Directorate of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra,

says, "We are giving five kinds of benefits to the hoteliers – electricity duty, water charges, property tax, non-agriculture tax, and development charges. So far, we have received 600 applications from various hotels and will now start physically inspecting these hotels to check if they meet the basic minimum parameters set by our expert committee. The certificate to avail 'industrial rates' will be accorded only after a hotel is able to meet all parameters clearly listed on the website. In case any hotel is not able to qualify, we will allow time to work upon the weak areas so that the hotel is fully able to comply with the parameters."

There are a total of 50 parameters in the Maharashtra Tourism minimum eligibility criteria list for industry status, which includes areas such as guest rooms, bathrooms, guest service, safety and security, kitchen and food, public area, hotel staff, code of conduct for safe tourism, and facilities for differently abled guests. There is also a list of (non-mandatory) additional features, which includes parameters such as conference facilities, business centres, F&B outlets, sewage treatment plants, and rainwater harvesting, among others. The certification process by the Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra is firmly grounded in the endeavour to help the industry recover faster post pandemic. The hospitality sector has been the hardest hit by the global pandemic, which brought the tourism industry to a complete standstill and left many hotels debt-ridden and scores of hospitality professionals jobless. The certification process for industry status will help hotels avail tariffs and duties on electricity, water, property, development, and non-agricultural taxes at industrial rates. The hotels have been paying all these charges and taxes at commercial rates till now.

To encourage sustainable practices and promote conscious tourism, "the parameters for green hotel certification are listed separately," he says. Whether economic or luxury, a hotel needs to meet the 43 parameters in order to receive the certificate of an eco-friendly hotel. He dubbed it a move that would strengthen the hotel industry in the future. He concludes, "The difference between the commercial rates and industrial rates is about 40 per cent. We hope that, in the long run, hoteliers will extend the benefit to the guests, which in turn will help in increasing the tourist footfall in the state."



**Dr. Dhananjay D Sawalkar**



**Certificate to avail 'industrial rates' will be accorded only after a hotel is able to meet all parameters**



# From 'service' to 'industry' status: A stride ahead

Regional heads highlight how, like all other industries, hospitality needs industry-specific aid from government to recover from its losses, leading to lower operational expenses.



Fhrai Bureau



**Sudesh Poddar**  
President, HRAEI

## NO SUBSTANTIAL BENEFIT

Giving the industry status to the sector will allow hospitality

establishments to benefit from reduced electricity and water charges, as well as lower property and development taxes, among other things. This will help in reducing operating costs for hospitality players, as industrial tariffs are substantially lower than the commercial tariffs that these companies currently pay.

The sector has been clamouring for industry status for over two decades. Such status will help entrepreneurs who wish to enter the hotel industry seek funding at a lower rate of interest and a longer tenure of 15-20 years. It



**Land cost for investors is the only benefit due to this policy**



will also benefit the majority of budget hotels in the country, with an investment of around ₹10-20 crore. It will help the industry get benefits such as reduced electricity and water charges and lower property and development taxes. It will help bridge the gap between tourism employments both globally and

in India. Some states in India, such as Karnataka, selectively confer industry status on only those hotels that have a star classification. This qualifies only about 70 hotels. In Maharashtra and Kerala, the respective state governments only offer lip service regarding industry status, which hardly translates into a substantial benefit.

In eastern India, Odisha was one of the first states to offer industry status to the tourism sector. The only advantage that has helped the hotel industry due to this policy so far is the land cost for the investors.





**Sherry Bhatia**  
President, HRAWI

## REGAINING LOST MOMENTUM

HRAWI has been requesting industry status for the hospitality sector for over two decades. During the last two years of the pandemic, hospitality businesses plunged to unprecedented levels, affecting liquidity and resulting in millions of people losing their livelihood. Had hospitality enjoyed an industry status, the damage could have been limited. After two decades of relentlessly pursuing the

**“Industry is hoping to receive relief on other statutory charges soon”**



Maharashtra government, towards the end of 2021, it announced industry status for the sector in the state. Shortly after the announcement,

the government provided relief on non-agricultural tax and electricity duty, and the industry is hoping to receive relief on other statutory charges soon. Like all other industries, hospitality too requires industry-specific relief from the government for it to recover from the losses and regain lost ground at the earliest.

Electricity should be charged at industrial rates and not commercial rates. While a state like Goa has implemented industrial rates for the hospitality and tourism sectors since 1999, Maharashtra continues to provide electricity at much higher commercial rates despite being declared an industry. Hotels and restaurants are not classified under the RBI's infrastructure lending norms for access to long-term funds. Therefore, the loan to the sector is available at 12 to 16 per cent. The industry status is required for the hospitality sector to avail long-term funds accessible at suitable interest rates along with other benefits for the overall development of the sector. This will naturally reduce the cost burden of the capital-intensive hospitality businesses and create a business environment

conducive to the sector. This will encourage new businesses to grow and will automatically increase job generation capacity, directly and indirectly.



**Surendra Jaiswal**  
President, HRANI

## UNLOCKING THE FULL POTENTIAL

With the onset of COVID-19, FY2021 witnessed contracted revenues and massive operating losses, resulting in an increase in debt levels (companies opted for loan moratoriums and borrowed incrementally for liquidity and working capital). The economic



fallout led to significant financial stress for hotel owners, potentially impacting the long-term viability of many hospitality firms. The hospitality industry is inherently capital-intensive in nature with a long gestation period. Historically, industry-wide debt levels for the industry have been high.

Therefore, the grant of industry status is expected to unlock the full potential of the hospitality and tourism sectors, help in quicker revival, make a significant contribution towards the state's employment and strengthen the industry. HRANI has sent representations to

the governments in the northern states, including UTs, for the same.

It has been a long-standing demand for the sector. We welcome the recent decision by the Government of Rajasthan and thank Ashok Gehlot, Chief Minister, for this tourism-friendly initiative. Some of the northern states have also declared hospitality and tourism as an industry, but the industry status in terms of concessions has not been extended and implemented.

Conferring industry status to the sector with proper notification to all departments for its implementation is the need of the hour. It will assist hospitality establishments in taking advantage of benefits such as reduced electricity and water

**“Industry status in terms of concessions is not yet extended”**

charges, as well as lower property and development taxes, among other things.

This will support in reducing operating costs for hospitality players, as industrial tariffs are substantially lower than the commercial tariffs that these companies currently pay.



# Changing GAME OF food tourism

As MoT and stakeholders step up their efforts of providing impetus to the industry, Executive Committee emphasises significance of food tourism in promoting destination.



**Param Kannampilly**

## EXPLORING GASTRONOMIC DIVERSITY OF INDIA

India is a unique country with diverse cultures. As varied as our states are, so are the cuisines. Each state has a lot to offer in terms of food. From Assam to Kerala, each state offers a cuisine which is as different as it can get. That is why, in order to boost tourism, it is appropriate to promote food.

Promoting food from different parts of the country is a very common thing as far as star-rated hotels are concerned. We can always find some or other food festival happening in hotels situated in various tier 1 and 2 cities. Besides, there are various other restaurants which are specialty restaurants in bigger

cities. The recent FHRAI proposal to host regional food festivals is a step in the right direction. It will showcase the gastronomic diversity of our country. We Indians are not exposed to various regional culinary delights. It will also boost tourism, as people are reluctant to travel to places if they are not sure about the kind of food they will get. A classic case of a lack of knowledge about regional cuisine is that of the north-eastern part of the country. There are so many people who do not want to visit these places as they do not know what type of food is available.

As far as The Fern Hotels are concerned, we conduct various food festivals where the chef of one property visits another property and exchanges their expertise and skills. This way, the entire kitchen team learns about a particular cuisine, and guests also get to taste authentic food from a particular part of the country.

**—Param Kannampilly**  
*Chairman & Managing Director*  
*Concept Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.,*  
*The Fern Hotels & Resorts*

“  
**Recent FHRAI proposal to host regional food festivals is a step in the right direction**  
”





## AUTHENTICALLY LOCAL

Without doubt, food and beverages (F&B) are the big-draws throughout the world, not just in India or its diverse regions. Wherever you go, be it in the remotest village of Spain or Italy, the local F&B is what the visitors will remember for years to come.



In Rajasthan, there is enormous diversity in local cuisines, tastes, and culinary styles. I certainly feel that Rajasthani-Mewari, Marwari, and Bikaneri-authentic cuisine and signature dishes can become the heroes of tourism, both domestic and foreign. At the same time, thanks to globalisation, there has been the democratic spread of F&B. Who could have imagined upper-crust Londoners asking for and enjoying kachoris and pakoras in Udaipur? Well, it has been happening with as much regularity as we Indians also go in search of pizzas from a wood-fired oven in Tuscany. As professional hoteliers, we have to showcase our signature dishes—the finest Lal Maans, Safed Maans, and Panchamel Dal—along with the makke ri roti, chutneys, and pickles. At the same time, the guest could be in the mood for some spicy Goan fish curry! Local delights, yes, but global tastes are also a yes-yes! That is why our chefs at HRH Group of Hotels can present a platterful of melt-in-the-mouth kebabs and naans, and a happy serving of Nasi Goreng! It is the challenge of our time: to be deeply authentically local while also being astonishingly global! Let's celebrate the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav with food that delights the palate and makes our hearts beat for the heritage of our land. Jai Mewar! Jai Hind!

— **Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar**  
*Executive Director*  
*HRH Group of Hotels, Udaipur*



**Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar**

“It is challenge of our time: to be deeply authentically local while also being global”

## FOOD TOURISM GAINS TRACTION

Culture has always played a crucial role in attracting tourism, and food is one of the key elements of that magnetism. The knowledge of local and regional cuisines is becoming a topic of interest for tourists. The basic idea of consuming local or ethnic food or drinks is considered a first-hand cultural experience and has always been on the bucket-list of tourists. In India, the promotion of food or food tourism as an integral part of its tourism allure has been picking up pace. The industry should value the relationship between food and culture – a significant means of connection between people and their heritage – which not only adds up to the cultural value of a particular destination but also helps the tourists recall the tourist destination. India has always been bestowed with incredible natural beauty, a unique cultural heritage, cuisine, and diversity. There are over 600,000 villages; hence, food tourism combined with ecotourism can be a great option to showcase unique experiences.

FHRAI recently met with G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Tourism, Culture, and Development of the North-Eastern Region, and submitted a representation with suggestions for the revival and growth of the industry. Apart from the various recommendations, FHRAI and its regional associations have pledged their full support and proposed organising region-specific food festivals across the country with the Ministry of Tourism for the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations. It is the right time for the hospitality

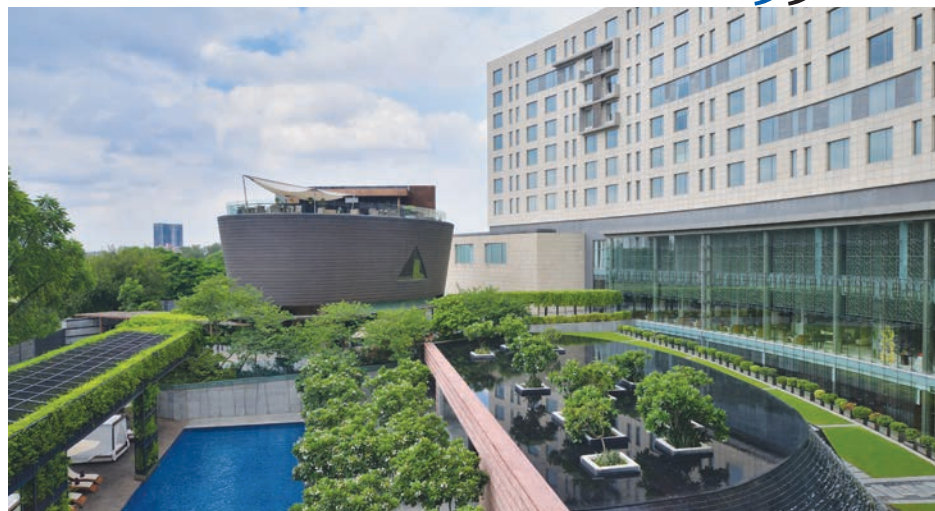
industry to take specific initiatives and have a complete focus on promoting regional cuisines to allure tourists. Since COVID-19 restrictions have been eased across the globe, people have started stepping out to fulfil their wanderlust, which had been shelved for quite some time, and food tourism could be the real game changer in the coming times.

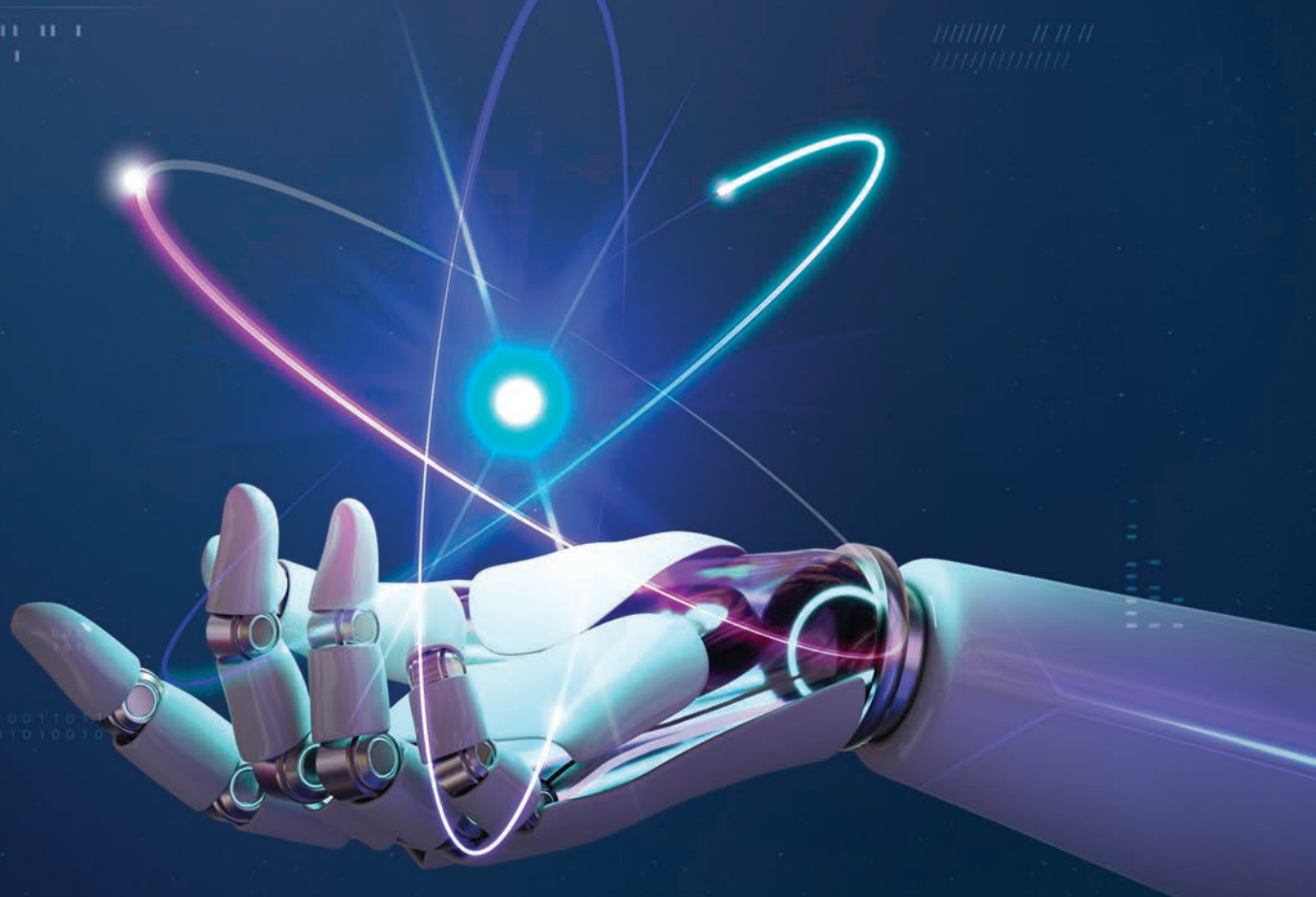
— **Vineet Taing**  
*President*  
*Vatika Hotels Pvt. Ltd.*



**Vineet Taing**

“It is right time for industry to focus on promoting regional cuisines to lure tourists”





# Realigning hospitality with technology

Hoteliers discuss how technology offers cost-saving revenue options, allowing hotels to reach new levels of profitability, from guest experience to operations and marketing.



**Reuben Kataria**

## DIGITAL GUEST EXPERIENCE

Situated amid the lush greenery of Bhartiya City, The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru uses state-of-the-art technology to redefine guest experiences and maintain an environmentally conscious approach.

Enhanced guest experiences at the hotel include television screens with Chromecast devices that are implemented for a select category of services. The property ensures to minimise electricity consumption through LED-based lighting with a low dimming system that reduces the voltage consumption and cuts electricity costs. We are also launching a mobile application for guests which will enable wireless and secure access to the rooms, among other lateral uses.

Besides these, at The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru, centralised modern automation systems are utilised to save electrical energy and reduce manpower for operations. The hotel makes use of the Ecobillz application for digitalisation of invoices and an enhanced digital guest experience with paperless operations across all revenue centres of the hotel.

The front office and F&B outlets in the hotel use electronic tablets that show invoices and allow guests to acknowledge and review these items on the tablet itself. All applications in use for the outlets on the property are centrally hosted on a self-hosted cloud. The property employs cutting-edge technology to reduce its carbon footprint, easing the burden on cost centres and boosting the hotel's revenue growth as well as reputation.



**The property employs cutting-edge technology to reduce its carbon footprint**



**—Reuben Kataria**  
General Manager

*The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru*



## FACILITATING CONVENIENCE

The new age of technology is playing a substantial role in empowering hotels to enhance guest experiences. Recent times have shown how technology has helped many hospitality businesses sail through challenging times. Hence, adapting to technology that appeals to customers in this highly competitive industry is the need of the hour, and we are leaving no stone unturned in utilising the latest innovations. DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square has embraced technologies that facilitate convenience for our guests and team members such as:

**Contactless payments:** It speeds up the process of payments and enhance guest satisfaction.

**Chatbots:** This facilitates automated answers to guest queries at all times of the day. It also attracts queries from people in different time zones.

**Digital check-ins:** For the ease of selecting and booking rooms, our Hilton Honors members enjoy the privilege of using the Hilton Honors app, which leads to a contactless experience. This technology has swerved the need for face-to-face customer interactions and is

understand the product and gives us a competitive edge as many businesses have not used this tech yet.

**Cybersecurity:** While new technologies always bring possibilities for security vulnerabilities, it becomes important to cultivate a culture of learning and quick responsiveness. Hence, we are taking measures to protect personal information from unauthorised access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction and to keep personal information accurate and up-to-date as appropriate.

**Artificial intelligence:** This facility helps us understand the guests' sentiments by analysing their feedback across all online platforms under one roof. This saves a lot of time and enables us to take quick action.

**Digital Communication:** As part of Hilton's Thrive at Hilton recognition programme, we have taken a digital path to recognise our team members' achievements and special days.

Apart from that, digital noticeboards are being used to carry the latest hotel updates and announcements



Jai Chugh



**We are leaving no stone unturned in utilising the latest innovations to enhance our services**



beneficial as it has a huge bearing on how customers feel about their first-hand experience upon arrival.

**Thermostats:** We are using thermostats with occupancy sensors to automatically adjust room temperatures at the time of check-in and check-out.

**Augmented reality:** We are using AR for a virtual tour of the property. This helps the customer better

for the team members. We are also generating content on social media to influence the buying decisions of potential customers. Whether it is dining or home delivery, all our F&B outlets are available for online reservations and ordering on all major food sites.

—Jai Chugh

*General Manager*

*DoubleTree by Hilton Gurugram Baani Square*



**Mehul Sharma**



**Various hotel software products make the process guest-friendly, a major factor behind bringing in more business**



## SIMPLIFYING WITH TECHNOLOGY

Technology plays a vital role in practically every industry and the hospitality industry is no exception to this. From a budget hotel to a global chain, there is no doubt that hotel technology increases revenue. Furthermore, its impact on the industry has also changed the way hotels run their businesses. We have invested time in updating, creating, and fortifying its operations to offer a contactless and seamless experience. Starting from confirmation emails to contactless key drops, speedy check-ins and check-outs, chatbots and AI-driven technology, we have mapped the complete guest journey and ensured all facets of the same have been meticulously taken into consideration and safeguarded.

Travellers, in this era, are now more inclined towards services that are tech-driven, simple, and deliver personalised experiences. These changing needs and wants of travellers are defining the way hotels operate. Technologies such as a cloud hotel PMS, mobile app, booking engine, and channel manager make the entire booking process really simple.

A hotel PMS makes the front desk more efficient as most of the tasks get automated. It even ensures speedy check-in and check-out. With a hotel mobile app, bookings can be managed directly from a smartphone. One can easily accept bookings, check-in and check-out guests, and perform a lot of other tasks. These direct bookings are commission-free and help cut costs. A booking engine helps with a seamless booking experience for guests and at the



backend. It provides guests with the opportunity to make reservations directly with your hotel from your website and social media.

Overbookings and double bookings might cost a business. And this is where a channel manager comes into the picture. With a channel manager, one can sell rooms on multiple OTAs at the same time. Also, it updates your inventory on all the channels in real-time, reducing the risk of overbooking. Other than the booking process, the latest technology helps in other spheres of hospitality such as mobile room keys and smart room service.

To conclude, various hotel software products allow hotels to accept bookings from multiple avenues in an error-free manner. It also makes the entire process guest-friendly, which is a major factor in bringing in more business.

— **Mehul Sharma**

*Founder & Chief Executive Officer  
Signum Hotels & Resorts*

# Engineered to precision

Shreeji International is focused on introducing best-in-class products for hospitality and food service industry in India. Products are gaining great popularity around the world.

**S**hreeji International, established in 2015, is an importer of high-end furniture for the hospitality and food service industry. The company specialises in sourcing innovative products and in bringing unique problem-solving solutions to the Indian market. Based in Hyderabad, it is well positioned to serve customers nationally and internationally, and the team of specialists is able to provide bespoke recommendations. The company is currently the sole distributor of the world-renowned and multi-award-winning FLAT table bases in India.

## RICH PRODUCT PORTFOLIO

The company is excited to be presenting its flagship products for the first time in India—FLAT table bases. FLAT Pty Ltd., has developed a range of over 40 award-



**FLAT's range of table bases are sold successfully in 35 countries spanning six continents**



winning table bases that automatically stabilise on uneven surfaces. We have also introduced FLAT Equalizers that stabilise and align existing tables. The patented hydraulic technology in the table base allows users to perfectly align multiple table tops when catering for groups. FLAT table bases stop the spillages and save operators time and

money in setting up tables each morning, reduce customer complaints.

## THE OUTLOOK

The company is focused on introducing best-in-class products. We have national coverage and are focused in the short term on introducing FLAT table bases to the Indian market. As distributors of FLAT table bases, we will introduce more table base styles to the market as the range grows and we are already experiencing high demand. The products are gaining great popularity around the world and are now being used by some of the world's largest restaurant chains. They recognise the value that the table bases bring to their operations and customers, and in the future, the vision is to see all table bases FLAT.



# By hoteliers for hoteliers

**Zubin Bilimoria**, MD & CEO, BingoForge, outlines how hoteliers are considering rising relevance of technology and integrating advanced solutions into their operations.

**T**echnology has taken precedence with most of our hotel partners. CRM today has become a need of the hour with most hoteliers. Hoteliers now understand that customer data and privacy are critical to their business. Data management via the myhotelCRM has helped our customers stay in touch with their customers through various media.

However, there are many hoteliers who still do not accept the need for a CRM. Here, we become a source to guide them by reasoning with our prospects why the shift is so imperative.

## FACILITATING SALES

As a CRM solution provider, the solution is more to facilitate sales operations for our hotel partners. Better data management, enhanced sales operations, timely follow-up, and sales closures are a few advantages that help increase sales revenues.

Our hotel partners have witnessed an increase in direct sales, converting just lost



**Zubin Bilimoria**

**“We become source to guide many hoteliers who still do not accept need for CRM by reasoning with our prospects why shift is so imperative”**

leads to sales. Customer data helps capture and maintain a lot of customer data as well as patterns of itineraries. Technology helps reach out to the guest and maintain records that help understand the guest better.

## ONE-STOP SOLUTION

CRM will be at the heart of all hotel solutions in the future. Leading PMS solution providers have partnered with BingoForge to provide the right CRM connection for hotel partners.

Our hotel partners see great value in customer data management, enhanced sales operations, better custom reports on demand, better RFP rate management, direct two-way sync with PMS providers, and on the fly DSR reporting.

Our hoteliers' CRM solution has been built by hoteliers for hoteliers. There are more PMS and other interfaces being built. BingoClubERP is the state-of-the-art ERP solution for club owners. It will enable us to customise and deploy within a fraction of the actual development cost and time.

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# Domestic TRAVEL DOMINANCE continues

With target of 10 hotels by end of this year, Choice Hotels is planning to venture into resort properties at leisure locations, shares **Vilas Pawar**, CEO, Choice Hotels India.



Lipla Negi



**Vilas Pawar**

## How have the last two years changed brand's vision and style of business?

Within a span of two months, we shifted from 80 per cent occupancy in February 2020 to nil in April 2020. We had to go back to the drawing board and figure out new ways to stay afloat and safe. The expenses were closely monitored and re-looked at, and immediate measures were taken to bring down the operational costs. In the spur of the moment, we had to recognise alternate business sources such as our hotels, which converted themselves into quarantine centres and were attached to nearby hospitals. Our ability to stand with our franchisee and employees went a long way during this economic and emotional turmoil. We continued to stay committed to our franchisees and helped them throughout.

## How does the brand go for out-of-the-box ideas to generate revenue?

We decided to use technology as the foremost

parameter to attract business. We suddenly had to step up and focus on digital marketing, online business delivery, and social media. Alternate revenue streams were recognised to churn the wheel, and hence hotels ventured into food delivery and catering at home. After the easing of lockdown regulations, amid focusing on hygiene protocols, hotels started promoting staycation and work-from-hotel packages. As travel opened up, we saw guests were comfortable travelling a drivable distance. At Choice Hotels, we launched the "Commitment to Clean" wherein the health and well-being of our guests, franchisees, and their associates is a top priority for us.

## Have the room rates bounced back?

Yes, there has been an improvement. However, the ADRs have not reached the pre-COVID-19 levels, but they are improving week-on-week. Slowly but surely, we are inching toward growth and expect to fully bounce back by the end of 2022 or early 2023. We have learned the importance of digital marketing and ways of generating business through intermediaries such as OTAs. Our goal is to expand our flags in tier 3 and 4 markets, as we discovered that mid-scale and tier 2, 3, and 4 markets recovered faster.



**We will expand our flags in tier 3 & 4 markets, as these markets recovered faster**





## EXPANSION PLANS 2022-23

We expect occupancy and ARR to return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of CY 2022 and by mid-CY 2023. We are hopeful that any other virus variant will not have an impact on the business demand that has been picked up, and a gradual increase is expected week by week. Choice Hotels India introduced the Ascend Collection, and a large audience has shown interest in associating with the brand. As the economy starts to show up, businesses will start recovering, and that will fuel our hotels. With the increase in opportunities for domestic travel, there has been an inclination towards venturing into leisure destinations amongst all segments.

An increasing number of standalone hotels are keen to join larger chains to leverage their global distribution channels, marketing platforms, hi-tech booking systems, and training and operating processes across all functions. We are considering more leisure destinations. We do have a presence in gateway cities that attract a fair share of inbound travellers, and as long as the sky is open, we expect to receive a share of inbound business. Currently, Choice Hotels India has a portfolio of 41 operational hotels. We are targeting to launch 10 hotels by the end of 2022. In total, we have 24 projects in the pipeline.

Domestic travel saw a major uptick in 2021 and kept us afloat. Choice Hotels is planning to venture into resort properties at leisure locations besides growing our existing business hotel portfolio.

### Domestic travel rules the roost post-2020. How did it work out for you?

Fortunately, most of our hotels feed on domestic business, so the boost was a blessing in disguise for us. Choice Hotels India strengthened its domestic leisure presence in the last two years with the addition of hotels in cities of tourist attractions and religious significance. In the last two years, Choice Hotels expanded and opened new properties in Rishikesh, Dehradun, Manali, Kaikaluru, Pathankot, and Burhar. Our existing presence in the religious cities of Amritsar, Varanasi, and Kumbakonam continued to attract pilgrims. We have a strong pipeline of hotels lined up in Udaipur, Bodh Gaya, and Dharamshala. We are blessed that our portfolio mix is classified for domestic business and leisure travel, with a presence in tier 2, 3, and 4 markets along with places of tourist interest. A fair share of our portfolio is in leisure destinations that have recorded high occupancy levels.

### What are the key trends?

The pandemic has brought fragility to the fore, and hence there is a need for flexibility in bookings and the minimum length of stay has been reduced. Also, online channels are being used to make bookings. The trend for flexible check-in and check-out and late cancellation options are seen as emerging preferred trends that travellers look for when choosing hotel accommodation. Paying at the hotel is more popular than paying in advance. Another trend emerging is alternative forms of payment using technology in integrated payment systems.

### As international travel resumes, do you feel the juggernaut of domestic travel will continue to maintain its pull?

Though domestic travel will continue to be dominant, a surge in demand for travel overseas can also be foreseen. The concept of bleisure travel is picking up pace, and hybrids are growing in popularity as

work-life boundaries blur. Where the destinations appeal, corporate travellers are adding weekends and weekdays to work trips, either solo or with partners or family. We intend to expand our domestic presence and offer experiential stays at a reasonable price. Our hotels have devised attractive packages. Hotels tend to also benefit from the Choice package of 'Book Early and Save', where guests can enjoy additional discounts for reservations made a week in advance.

### Has the pandemic amplified the influence of OTAs?

The role of an OTA is becoming increasingly important in the accommodation industry. Travel trade partners are the eyes and the ears. They are responsible for reaching out, researching demand, marketing our product, and packaging our properties; thus, they are critical to our business. They provide us with market performance indicators, and we collaborate with them as partners to increase revenue for our franchised hotels. Also, there are trade events in which Choice Hotels India regularly participates and promotes all hotels under our umbrella. Yes, the pandemic increased our reliance on OTAs to some extent.



**We have a strong pipeline of hotels lined up in the cities of Udaipur, Bodh Gaya, and Dharamshala, which would also support the domestic travel demand**



# Tech is changing business

**Binu Mathews**, CEO, IDS NEXT opines that technology will continue to drive future, with tech firms constantly influencing development and driving positive changes.

Since the impact of COVID-19 has lessened, we have identified a more robust trend towards cloud technology solutions as businesses try to compete in the market by applying differentiation strategies to provide their guests with the ultimate experience. Cloud services are now considered premium as chains and brands focus on investing in digitisation. Hence, a significant trend is shifting towards enterprise cloud solutions. The fear of guest data in public clouds is addressed by genuine enterprise cloud providers who offer private, secure cloud applications.



**Binu Mathews**

## GUEST SATISFACTION IS KEY

Hospitality businesses expect to provide contactless solutions at all guest touchpoints for a seamless experience. Hotel Technology News confirms that 77.6 per cent of hoteliers will increase their investments in hotel technology in the next three years. Another published article also confirmed that 73 per cent of travellers are most likely to choose



**We will continue to focus on innovation and the constant improvements that arise from industry trends**



has learned to focus on two factors. Firstly, customised travel has become increasingly popular. Secondly, it has learned to focus on providing a seamless journey from check-in to check-out. Integration of cutting-edge technology and implementation of intelligent solutions will help businesses boost sales as travellers are confident about their contactless and seamless journey. According to GlobeNewswire, the global travel technologies market is expected to reach US \$12.5 billion by 2026, with blockchain and AI transforming the travel industry.

## DRIVING FACTORS

Trends such as complete cloud solutions, customisable applications, hyper-automation, and seamless services will motivate businesses to continue integrating technology into their operations. Full-stack enterprise cloud-based, guest engagement, and housekeeping products are our most in-demand solutions.

## MAPPING OUT ADVANTAGES

The new normal has led to businesses operating differently, prioritising guest requests and allowing them to have a contactless journey. There has also been a considerable staff turnover as most skilled employees sought jobs elsewhere, leaving hoteliers to operate with a minimum staff. We focus on eliminating such shortages and promote DIY guest services by offering guest engagement applications that do not require staff dependencies.

## MOVING FORWARD

Alongside our recent acquisition by ShawMan Software Private Limited, we look forward to integrating many synergies in our solutions and combining our expertise. We can eliminate the need for hotels to work with multiple vendors and non-similar systems. With the addition of cloud-based Point of Sales (PoS), table booking software, spa, sales and catering, and club management, we will be able to accelerate our growth further in the leisure, F&B, and wellness segments. We will continue to focus on innovation and the constant improvements that arise from industry trends. Our innovations are focused on actionable intelligence utilising guest data patterns.



hotels offering self-service technology. Our full-stack enterprise cloud solutions offer a wide range of solutions for hotels, restaurants, wellness, and leisure solutions. These products simplify guest communication and interaction in a contactless and hassle-less manner. We work as a trusted partner and supplier in more than 45 countries with a customer base of more than 6,000 and are

capable of managing 300,000 daily check-ins, 600,000 daily users, and US \$10 million in everyday transactions.

## BESPOKE TRAVEL

The pandemic has caused a dark cloud over the industry. However, businesses are now recovering and blooming, adding differentiation to their strategies. The industry





# USHERING in a new era of hospitality

COVID-19 crisis is leaving innovation in its wake by way of next-gen tech, transforming hospitality operations and marketing as well as reshaping customer experience.

**T**he world is now experiencing the fourth industrial revolution, a period marked by emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, virtual reality (VR), the Internet of Things (IoT), and fifth-generation (5G) wireless technology. Hence, technology is becoming all the more prevalent people's lives. It is now being integrated into the day-to-day operations of a hotel. As hotels begin to reopen and strive toward full occupancy, technology is now more important than at any other moment in history, and is set to play a vital role in recovery.

There is no denying the fact that the yearning to travel is as strong as ever after two years of quarantine. The question is no more whether people want to travel, but rather how they want to travel. They increasingly prefer self-service to having to wait to be served, with tech-enabled convenience anticipated at every stage. From online planning and booking to contactless check-in and a digital concierge available 24x7, the hospitality digital revolution is quickly advancing due to the demands of today's technodexterous, hygiene-conscious travellers.

These disruptive shifts in the industry have resulted from both the pandemic and modern scientific

breakthroughs. COVID-19-era security measures have dramatically altered the way hotels function, with an increased need for contactless services. And, in the post-pandemic hospitality landscape, smart capabilities and offerings that were once regarded as add-ons will fast become essential.

## INDIA FOLLOWS 'TECH' SUIT

The Indian hospitality sector has been slow to jump on the bandwagon, putting cutting-edge technological advancements on the backburner for years. Before the ongoing pandemic, a few properties in the country introduced smart tech features in rooms, but the examples were few and far between. Most hotel rooms followed the standard practices. Only a few have started applying advanced room features primarily to reduce costs and increase their sustainability quotient. Things have now changed in the last year. Hoteliers were forced to adopt technological innovations to survive during the pandemic and some of them have realised that tech-driven changes are here to stay.

## TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION IS RISING...

A Stayntouch/NYU Tisch Center of Hospitality report found that 81.7 per cent of hoteliers polled used or planned to use at least one new technology during the pandemic. The use of smart technology in hotels is not

**“Finding a balance between digital ease and in-person experiences is imperative for hospitality companies**





**COVID-19 has expedited the digital transformation of the hospitality industry with an unimaginable speed**



a new notion in the world. In recent years, brands such as Taj, Marriott, Hilton, Accor, and others have been experimenting with their own mobile applications, smart room features, and other technology advancements at their properties. Because customer expectations and demands are always evolving, being au courant with them is especially important in the context of COVID-19. Some of the key trends are:

**Contactless payment systems:** This feature is at the forefront of developments to make guests feel more at ease when staying in hotels. Contactless technology is easily compatible with loyalty programmes, in addition to expediting payments.

**Mobile check-in:** The ability to check in through a mobile app minimises the requirement for a large welcome desk. This will also alleviate the need for customers to spend time at the front desk, which is important for business travellers and families. It is also key for reducing face-to-face interaction.

**Concierge apps:** Guests may use concierge apps to schedule their whole stay from their smartphones. Concierge apps can integrate chatbots to make the visitor experience more engaging and customised, besides recommending restaurants, attractions, and activities in the surrounding region. In-room tablets stocked with concierge apps and other useful information have replaced room service menus and brochures in several hotels.

**Advanced Wi-Fi:** As more visitors work remotely, stream content, and play online games, hotels will need to forgo the user-pay paradigm and supply appropriate bandwidth. Wi-Fi6 can be up to 30 per cent quicker. It may also be utilised in hotel rooms for smart gadgets. Near-field communication (NFC) is also being used in hotels. NFC technology may relieve Wi-Fi networks of part of their load and is excellent for mobile check-in and keyless admission.

**Voice control:** This could include everything from smart speakers in hotel rooms that allow for the management of various in-room equipment to automated order processing in restaurants that

eliminates the need for customers to wait for staff to take their orders.

**Robotics:** One of the most intriguing advances in housekeeping is the deployment of robotics. The pandemic has turned the concept of deploying robotics from a curiosity to a pragmatic one. Robots can deliver room service and clean rooms without touching them, lowering the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

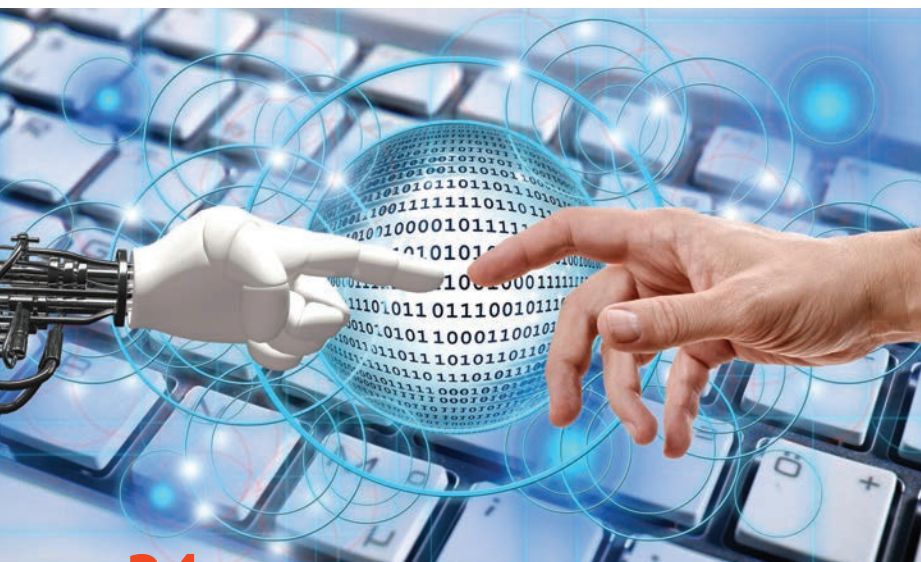
**Big data:** It will be leveraged to great use by the hospitality industry to deliver more personalised experiences. Travel agencies, for example, may use it to provide insightful travel suggestions based on age, gender, budget, prior travel destinations, and so on. Big data helps companies to detect trends that can be utilised for revenue management.

### ...BUT NOT WITHOUT CHALLENGES

While realising the revolutionary aspects of digital technologies, there are a number of new challenges that hospitality professionals must consider when adopting them, including security, privacy, costs, and the importance of human touch. In every business, including hospitality, security is a major concern when it comes to digitalisation. Because digital technologies are so interconnected, they are vulnerable to hackers. The widespread connectivity of many devices exposes digital networks to risk. Another key consideration is privacy, as personalised services rely on digital technology to store and monitor guest preferences and behaviour. Customers are becoming more conscious of their data privacy, and any data breach might result in a catastrophe in the industry. Another barrier is the high expense of implementing these technologies. Small firms may need to make considerable initial costs to incorporate digital technology into their everyday operations. As a result, it is becoming increasingly important for hoteliers to determine which technologies will benefit them the most. The dichotomy between digital convenience and in-person experience is the final point to consider. Customers prefer customer-staff connections in hospitality, notably in fine dining. Such contact may be reduced by voice assistants and other digital transformations. Hence, finding a balance between digital ease and in-person experiences is imperative for hospitality firms.

### THE ROAD AHEAD

After momentous two years in history, the industry cannot expect a return to normal. COVID-19 has expedited the digital transformation of the industry with unimaginable speed, forcing many hospitality practitioners to adopt digital technologies that would otherwise not be adopted so quickly. Hence, digital transformation in the industry is more significant than ever, and it is time for businesses to embrace this change. Even smaller hotels can make simple changes to gain an edge over businesses that are not using advanced systems. If hospitality companies are going to keep up, technology will be paramount.





# Digitalisation of hospitality

While hotels and technology development faced a snag during the pandemic, both technology providers, such as Prologic First, and hotels will be able to smooth out the overall guest experience.

**L**arger hotels and chains are making active efforts to adapt and adopt newer technologies while smaller hospitality businesses struggle or are reluctant to explore technology. A lot of progress has been made on booking, customer experience (CX), and channel management technologies. While hotels and the development of these technologies hit a speed bump during the pandemic, both technology providers and hotels will be able to catch up and smoothen the entire CX.

On the hotel side, these technologies help receive bookings from various channels, such as OTAs, agents, and walk-ins at optimum rates, avoid double bookings, reduce surplus inventory, and help raise the revenue of the hotel. The key drivers of technology adoption or non-adoption are awareness, cost, and resources. Prologic First has been making strong efforts to improve the understanding and adoption of technology by making it more accessible and affordable so more and more properties can benefit from the use of the right technology.

## ENHANCING CX & REVENUE

Revenue growth and profitability are equally dependent on a well-managed, strong backbone of operations and finance. Hospitality establishments are increasingly seeing gains from automation and efficiency in tech-enabled purchasing and inventory management. Efficient inventory management and waste reduction have seen F&B operations save up to 25 per cent, while the usage of service request management software helps hotels raise guest satisfaction rates by over 20 per cent,



**Revenue growth and profitability are equally dependent on a strong backbone of operations and finance**

while at the same time raising efficiency and lowering maintenance and service costs. Chains can use technology effectively by setting up a shared service infrastructure and using a central back office. This is something Prologic has been helping some of its customers with. Instead of having a back office infrastructure in every hotel, a central back office with cloud technology and a central team managing operations for the entire chain helps cut costs on several fronts as well as unifies operations.

## KEY TRENDS

Personalisation, CX, data security, business intelligence, AI, contactless points of interaction, and the cloud are the current buzzwords. On the customer-facing side, technologies that are evolving fast and are being adopted rapidly include social presence, customer recognition and profiling, seamless hotel bookings and restaurant reservations through multiple channels, including social media, chatbot concierges,

mobile check-in and check-outs, QR codes across the property, digital menus with order and pay, mobile payments and bill splitting. On the back office side, AI and ML are making systems more intuitive and help users detect outliers within their purchase, inventory, and accounting systems.

## CHALLENGES

The most common problem that technology addresses today is the breaking down of data silos, allowing business owners to read and understand their data better and use the insights to improve their business performance. There is a goldmine of customer data lying in different places within hotels and restaurants, and the correct management and use of that data, along with the right tools, will help fuel the hospitality businesses of the future. Another common issue is striking the right balance among technology, usability, and investment.

## NEW INNOVATIONS

Our popular Back Office system, Web Prol'IFIC, now allows users to request reports using voice commands and offers an advanced Hawkeye feature to help detect any anomalies in the system, thereby helping users detect incorrect and inappropriate transactions. Our cloud PMS users can use dynamic and predictive pricing to help them sell the maximum number of rooms and at the best possible pricing. @yourWISH, our guest request management system already lets hotel staff accept and manage guest requests through their mobile phones and will soon be able to use a chatbot assistant to ensure timely and satisfactory problem resolution and request handling.

# Hotels cheer **HIGH** summer **ADRs**

Hoteliers across the country are witnessing a rise in ADR, which is welcomed by all brands as they prepare not only for revival but unprecedented growth, which is better than what they had seen before COVID-19 hit the industry hard two years ago.



Nisha Verma



**Zubin Saxena**

**A**pril is usually a low travel period in India and not a usual high occupancy period for hotels either. However, while recovery from the Omicron wave continues, India's hotel industry surpassed pre-pandemic figures in occupancy and average daily rate (ADR) for three consecutive days (16-18) during the second week of April, revealed STR recently.

"Thus, 16-18 April were the first days of 2022 with both occupancy and ADR above 2019 levels in India. When using a running seven-day average, occupancy and ADR have been above 90 per cent of pre-pandemic comparables since late-March. On Monday, 18 April, India recorded its highest ADR index of the year at 106 per cent of the 2019 comparable. Occupancy surpassed pre-pandemic levels earlier in the year, reaching as high as 109 per cent of the corresponding 2019 level on 25 March," stated STR.

Even RateGain, as part of its monthly PULSE report, revealed that April saw the same number of bookings being made as March, inching closer to pre-pandemic levels. March usually has higher bookings across the country than in April.

According to the report, the average daily rate at which rooms were available was 105 per cent higher in Mumbai and 62 per cent higher in Delhi when compared to the previous month. In fact, this

scenario only got better in May, and ADRs are only increasing in the summer.

## **FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH**

Hotels, both chain brands and individual properties, have seen this ADR rise for a variety of reasons. **Zubin Saxena**, Managing Director and Vice President-Operations, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, shares, "The ease of mobility restrictions backed by pent-up demand has translated into increased summer travel. We are recording healthy ADRs and occupancy rates across our portfolio of 108 hotels in India for both leisure and business. Our key markets, such as Delhi NCR, Mumbai, and leisure destinations, including Lonavala, Dharamshala, Mussoorie, and Shimla, are driving recovery for us. We are optimistic for a robust season ahead."

Echoing the same response, **Abinash Manghani**, Chief Executive Officer, WelcomHeritage, says, "The ADR levels have not just recovered to 2019 levels, but in fact improved by 22 per cent in 2021-22 as compared to 2019-20. The leisure destinations of WelcomHeritage have fared very well, with forays into newer leisure destinations such as Jawai in Rajasthan and Shimla in Himachal Pradesh increasing the ADR levels. Favourable factors in market conditions also facilitated a sharp rebound in leisure, weddings, some MICE, as well as some SME business travel, when operations were permitted. High demand for our hotels allowed for rate propensity and resulted in huge gains for these destinations. We have also witnessed frequent extended stays and work-from-home means that resort cottages, villas, and suites become offices, classrooms, and homes for many."



**We are recording healthy ADRs and occupancy rates across all of our 108 hotels in India**





For **Pratima Badhwar**, Chief Commercial Officer, India & South Asia, Accor, the start of the summer season was also accompanied by a rise in ADR. "ADRs for our hotels have been growing month-on-month this year so far. April has been a phenomenal month for us, as we have managed to close April ADRs above 2019 April levels as well, which is a strong indication of business recovery," she shares.

**Arif Patel**, Regional Vice President-Sales & Marketing, Hyatt India, also says that the hospitality sector in India has bounced back quickly. "We are seeing an increase in bookings at all our hotels at Hyatt. The occupancy rate for the period of 1 March to 27 March this year was 69 per cent, a substantial improvement over February, which witnessed 56 per cent occupancy. While the ADR for April 2022 was 14 per cent higher than April 2019 levels, the year to date (YTD) 2022 ADR is only 8 per cent lower than the ADR for 2019. This was mainly due to the impact of the third wave in the month of January. We are positive about the long-term recovery and expect the ADRs to reach 2019 levels in the coming months," he says.



As an individual property, Claridges too has shown the same growth. **Himanshu Kumar**, Hotel Manager, The Claridges, New Delhi, says, "We are trending at around 80 per cent of the pre-COVID-19 ADR numbers. This is currently ahead of the market conditions at large. In my opinion, the 2019 levels will first be achieved by the luxury and upper upscale segments of hotels by the end of this year. This is because they have always been the preferred hotels for the foreign clientele, which will subsequently improve the ADR and occupancy levels. As the rates go up for this segment, there will be a ripple effect on other segments of hotels."

**Rakshit Sharma**, Chief Executive Officer, Rester Hotels & Resorts, shares, "Hotel occupancies continue

to rise with corporate travel returning alongside leisure travel. Room tariffs have gone back to their pre-pandemic level. I believe this year we will exceed revenues of 2019 by 10-15 per cent, should there be no pandemic."

## DRIVING GROWTH

The reasons behind this growth are many. For Accor, says Badhwar, "Corporate demand is leading the way in terms of recovery, along with an increase in MICE queries. Our business hotels across the country are seeing the corporate mix increase."

Manghani explains, "The domestic segment with revenge tourism is leading the recovery. Recovery from the second wave has been far quicker than the first, with fewer restrictions and better awareness and planning; recovery from the third wave appears even more rapid. The domestic segment has been by-and-large undeterred by any flight restrictions within the country since road connectivity is now pretty good, leading to new markets for regional destinations. The importance of staycations and



**Abinash Manghani**

“**ADR levels have not just recovered to 2019 levels, but improved by 22 per cent in 2021-22 as compared to 2019-20**”



**Rakshit Sharma**

“**Occupancies rise with corporate travel returning alongside leisure travel**”



short holidays is reflected in the continued lead of weekend demand."

According to Saxena, leisure travel will continue to lead the industry towards recovery. However, what will solidify this trend is embedding consumer trust by consistently ensuring reliability in terms of safety and hygiene. "We are also noticing a strong boost from MICE across our hotels. Weddings and socials as a segment continue to support our hotels in tier 1 and 2 cities. We believe that the fundamentals of the industry and its leadership are robust, and we are well on our way to bullish growth in the coming months."

Patel also attributes the growth to leisure travel. "Recovery in the Indian market has picked up pace



Arif Patel



**We are positive about long-term recovery and expect ADRs to reach 2019 levels in future**



and is being driven mostly by leisure travel. Even as major cities see an uptick in travel, we foresee resorts and leisure destinations at driveable distances from these cities registering high levels of occupancy and bookings. With international travel having opened up, the MICE segment has started to pick up as well, and we could well witness its peak in 2022, returning to and exceeding the pre-pandemic demand for this vertical. Local destinations for weddings have become a growing preference in India too. This sector has particularly seen tremendous traction, and we have witnessed a steady increase in the number of queries and bookings for weddings all year long in 2021, and the first quarter of 2022 as well," he claims.

Kumar says it is a mixed bag, including leisure, trade, and various other segments. "The retail segment continues to lead the way. Given that we have entered the hot summer months, I do not foresee international guests coming. After the retail segment, we have seen some large movements in a few of the social, military, education, religious, and fraternal groups (SMERF) and MICE segments. We continue to witness some numbers in terms of travel trade, but there has been some activity and optimism for the winter months of 2022," he adds. Sharma also says, "The rise in bookings is being mostly seen for leisure stays, MICE events, and weddings."

### MANAGING DEMAND

Hotels, too, are leaving no stone unturned to meet this demand in the best possible manner. Manghani shares, "At WelcomHeritage, we have been quick to adapt our offerings and practices to the evolving expectations of the potential domestic traveller. Weddings were an added boost for resorts, and enticing staycation packages in city hotels were crafted. Flexibility was key to guest bookings, and we have been sensitive to prices too. This agility has played a tremendous role in our business growth and plans. Over the last year, the spectrum of WelcomHeritage expanded beyond the typical destinations of Kasauli, Srinagar, Shimla, Manali, Mussoorie, Nainital, Coorg, and Rajasthan."

Patel adds, "At Hyatt in India, we are focusing more on our leisure segment to enhance luxury travel. We foresee a healthy growth of leisure properties going forward; Hyatt Regency Dehradun and Hyatt Regency Jaipur Mansarovar are good examples of this. Moreover, travel has become extremely experiential and educational—it is about experiencing the authenticity of a destination, and that is exactly what our luxury hotels will offer—a real and true experience of the destination in its best form. Each of our leisure hotels will have an enhanced approach to personalisation, meaningful connections, family-friendly activities and creating memorable experiences. Currently, we have eight leisure hotels in India, and we aim to double our leisure footprint by 2024. Of the 24 openings slated



for the next three years, a third will be focused on leisure and cultural destinations. This will add an additional dimension to our distribution."

### PLANS AHEAD

Sharing their growth plans, Patel informs, "The launch of Hyatt Centric Janakpuri New Delhi is our second launch after the recent opening of Hyatt Regency Dehradun earlier this year. With these two additions, we now have 7,531 rooms across 34 Hyatt hotels in India. In 2022, we plan to open nine more hotels across various brands that will cater to the needs of both leisure and business travellers. With over 24 executed deals for hotels, we plan to expand our brand footprint in India by eyeing more than 70 per cent growth, adding over 3,800 keys with more than 50 hotels in our portfolio in India by 2023. This is happening for the first time in the history of Hyatt in India. The Hyatt Regency brand continues to drive the group's growth in India and will enter two new regions with the Hyatt Regency Jaipur Mansarovar and Hyatt Regency Trivandrum. We also plan to grow the Hyatt Place brand further. The new hotels which are planned for this year under the Hyatt Place brand will see Hyatt entering five new regions with Hyatt Place Bodh Gaya, Hyatt Place Goa Candolim, Hyatt Place Vijayawada, Hyatt Place Jaipur Malviya Nagar, and Hyatt Place Bharuch. Currently, we have eight distinct brands in the country—Andaz, Alila, Hyatt, Hyatt Centric, Hyatt Place, Hyatt Regency, Grand Hyatt, and Park Hyatt. We are focused on introducing brands to destinations where guests are currently travelling or would like to travel. The aim is to ensure a multi-brand presence across cities such as Delhi, Gurugram (Gurgaon), Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Pune and Goa."

Saxena shared that in 2021, they will open 12 hotels. "We are working towards replicating this performance in 2022 also. This year, we have successfully opened three hotels across India, with more hotels and resorts in the pipeline. With a robust pipeline of 12–15 hotel signings and 10–12 hotel openings every year, we are looking at exceptional growth momentum in India. Our focus areas include strengthening our network presence



Himanshu Kumar



**We are trending at around 80% pre-COVID-19 ADRs. This is ahead of market conditions**







in the country by introducing hotels across tier 3, 4, and 5 cities; and new brands such as Radisson RED and our recently launched brand extension, Radisson Individual Retreats. Our journey on the road to recovery is supported by the group's focus on leisure and domestic travel," he says.

Even WelcomHeritage is on an expansion drive. "We are planning to continue the brand's expansion within the country with three planned openings in 2022, including WelcomHeritage Azora, Fort Kochi; WelcomHeritage Ayatana, Ooty; and WelcomHeritage Parv Vilas, Kasauli Hills, Solan. When operational, these properties will add 101 keys to the existing inventory

of 944 keys," claims Manghani. He adds, "While the focus on domestic travellers remains undeterred, our prime revenue generator pre-COVID-19, the inbound market, is already showing a promising comeback. We are looking to achieve 30-40 per cent of our revenues from this segment in 2022, as opposed to the pre-pandemic levels of 80 per cent."

For Accor, says Badhwar, "Our future pipeline is robust, currently comprising 16 properties across a number of brands including Raffles, Fairmont, Novotel, and Ibis, which will bring more than 1,600 rooms to our portfolio."

Claridges, on the other hand, is not looking at expanding the portfolio. "We are not opening any new hotels at The Claridges. However, we have spent a lot of time redeveloping our existing hotels. The Claridges New Delhi already has a new lobby, and we have also relaunched the Pickwick restaurant. We are on the verge of launching our redesigned rooms in the hotel. In the coming months, we will renovate all the rooms and restaurants. Our other hotel, The Claridges Nabha Residence, is also earmarked to go through the redevelopment."

Sharma shares that the new openings at Rester Hotels & Resorts include properties at Jim Corbett, Hyderabad-Gachibowli & Hi Tech City, Jodhpur, Mumbai, and Kota across all three brands, i.e., Resort, Select, and Xpress.



Pratima Badhwar

**April has been phenomenal for us, as we have managed to close ADRs above 2019 April levels**

"Performance of hotels all across major cities in the country witnessed a speedy recovery after the third wave of the pandemic. Domestic leisure, long weekends, weddings, and events continued to be the mainstays. We are also experiencing an uptick in the segment of domestic corporate travel as office occupancies have increased and people have restarted travelling for client meetings as well as off-sites. The steady growth of international corporate travel has improved confidence in the travel industry. Uncertainty may still persist around variants and waves of COVID-19, but we are of the opinion that the hospitality sector is poised for a healthy and profitable recovery in 2022," observes **Jaideep Dang**, Managing Director, Hotels and Hospitality Group, South Asia, Jones Lang LaSalle Incorporated (JLL).



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**A**kshada Gupta, a Mumbai-based photographer and videographer, is one of the most sought-after creative connoisseurs, stylists, and photographers. We travel the world, shooting content. Social media has turned out to be an inseparable part of our lives today. With the immense number of users, various social media platforms give businesses ample opportunities to interact with their audience. It not only helps hotels to promote their businesses but also creates an effective online presence. And what do you need to do to do just that? Photos and videos. Yes, and a lot of them! Your property is going to need content every day to stay relevant. This gives hoteliers an easy way to showcase their property and attract more guests.



Akshada Gupta

social media marketing strategy. I realised the market lacked quality in the mid-priced photography and videography world. So I decided to bridge this gap. We specialise in food photography, cinematic, drone footage, and interior and exterior photography as well as videography.

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# Appointments



**PIYALI SAHA**

Director of Sales  
Novotel Guwahati GS Road

★ Saha is a strategic and passionate hotelier with over a decade of experience in India with renowned hospitality chains such as Accor, The Oberoi, and Marriott. With her core expertise in sales and business development, she is presently responsible for taking care of sales, revenue, and marketing for the property. The S&M team at Novotel Guwahati will be led by Piyal Saha, with the aim of delivering promising results while achieving annual targets, building relationships, and understanding customer trends.



**AMIT MAHAJAN**

Chief Growth Officer  
Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

★ Mahajan will bring over 23 years of progressive work experience, which has been focused on hotel development, hotel real estate acquisitions, investment analysis, and growth strategy. He will help the company spearhead its next phase of expansion and achieve the goal of building 100 Cygnett hotels over the next few years. Before joining Cygnett, he had an entrepreneurial stint in the leisure accommodation space, and before that, he served as Director of Development with InterGlobe Hotels.



**ERICA GOMES**

Senior Sales Manager  
Sheraton Grand Pune

★ At Sheraton Grand Pune, Gomes will be using her 12 years of sales experience to identify and target groups that will generate business. She will also be in-charge of using company-wide programmes, sales developments, WSO customer events, and reporting for group business development. She has been a part of various Indian and international hotel chains such as InterContinental Hotels Group, Four Seasons, Marriott International, and Accor Hotels. She has also worked in the ME market.



**SAPTARSHI BISWAS**

Hotel Manager  
The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi

★ Biswas will play a key role in overseeing the operations of the hotel across all functions and ensuring the highest levels of guest satisfaction. He has been associated with Marriott International for over eight years, having worked with hotels such as JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield, The Westin Chennai Velachery, and The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace. Prior to this, he was the Hotel Manager for Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad Sindhu Bhawan Road.



**ROHIT PANDEY**

Hotel Manager  
The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru

★ Pandey, who has been with the property since its pre-opening days, has been promoted from Executive Assistant F&B Manager to Hotel Manager. He has over two decades of experience in luxury properties in Thailand, the Seychelles, the Maldives, and India, and has a proven track record of six successful pre-openings. He has held various managerial roles with The Oberoi Group at Trident Agra, The One & Only Reethi Rah Maldives, Anantara Resort Maldives, and Central Hotels & Resorts, to name a few.



**AYAN KARMAKAR**

Food and Beverage Manager  
Double tree by Hilton Agra

★ From his exceptional experience in the F&B industry, Karmakar brings expertise and a wealth of knowledge from his domain. He will play a crucial role in helping the team to translate their business objectives, especially at the Kebab-e-que, North 27, and all other F&B outlets at the hotel. Prior to this stint at Double Tree by Hilton Agra, he has worked with brands, including The Lalit Ashok Bangalore, Shangri-La Bengaluru, Hyatt Regency Chennai and The Leela Kempinski Mumbai, among others.



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