

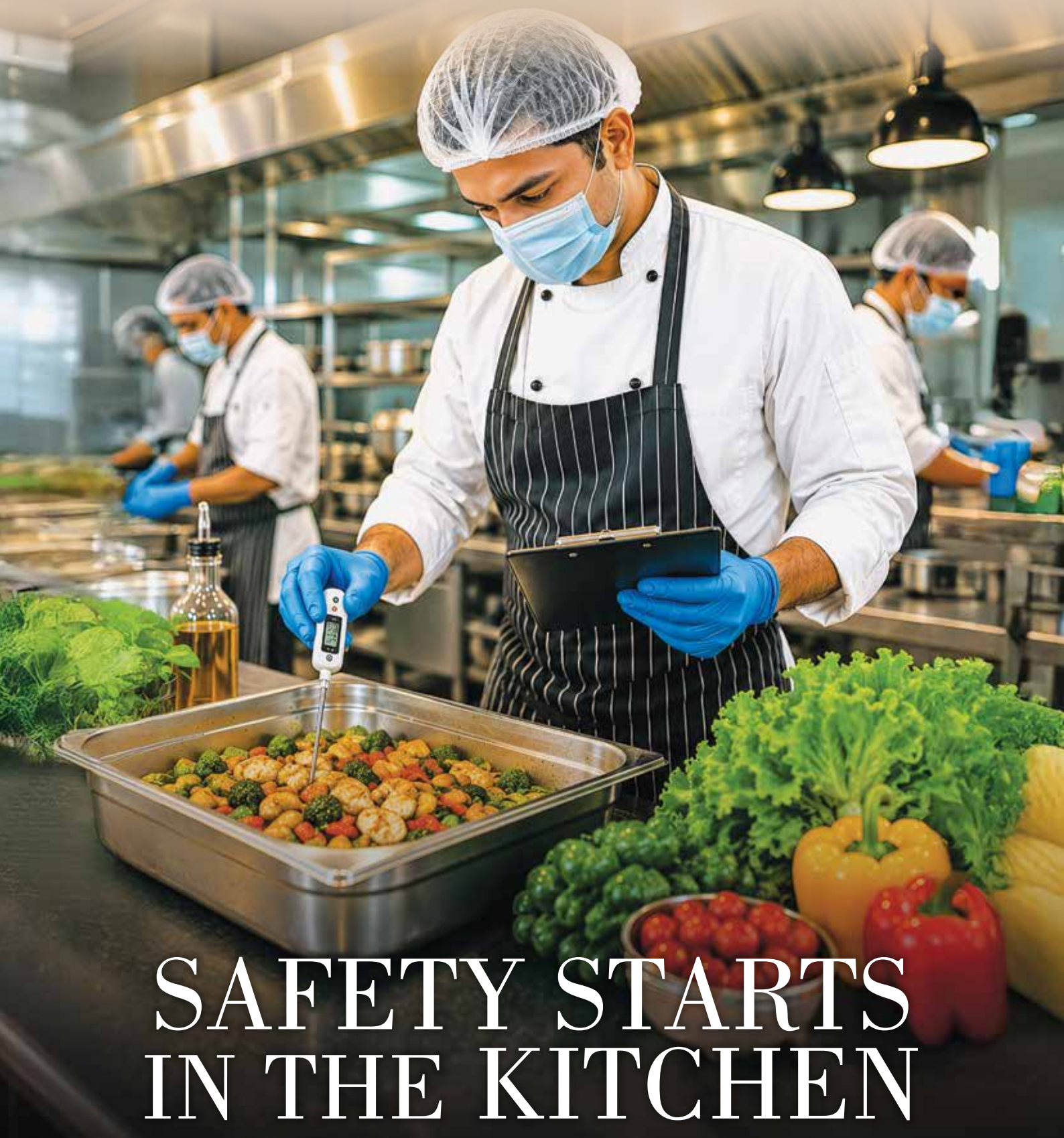
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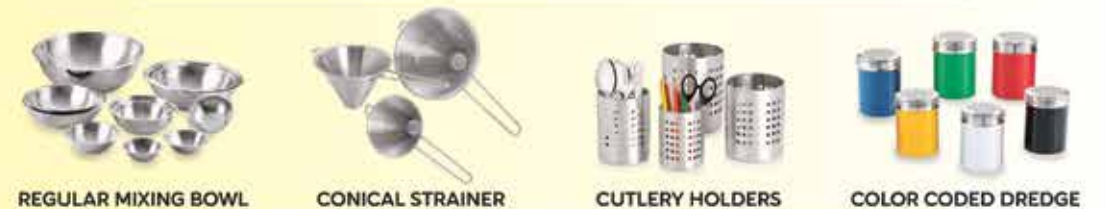
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President's Message



Dear members,

The hospitality industry continues to evolve amidst changing regulatory landscapes, growing consumer expectations, and new opportunities for collaboration. Our commitment remains resolute – to represent the interests of our members, strengthen industry standards, and work closely with Government and regulatory authorities to promote a progressive and sustainable hospitality ecosystem for all stakeholders.

One of the key developments in recent weeks has been the Maharashtra FDA's intensified focus on food safety enforcement. HRAWI wholeheartedly supports the objective of ensuring the highest standards of hygiene and food safety, which are fundamental to consumer trust and the credibility of our industry. At the same time, we have represented to the authorities the need for enforcement to be fair, consultative, and in accordance with due process and industry realities.

Together with fellow industry associations, we have advocated an approach that allows businesses the opportunity to undertake corrective measures before punitive action or public disclosure, thereby safeguarding both consumer interests and the livelihoods of thousands employed by our sector. We remain committed to working constructively

with FDA to strengthen compliance through awareness, training, and continuous engagement.

Another significant milestone for HRAWI has been the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC). This partnership marks an important step towards strengthening Maharashtra's hospitality ecosystem through closer collaboration between the public and private sectors.

The MoU aims to enhance operational standards at MTDC resorts, promote tourism, improve visitor experiences, and facilitate training, and industry alignment. We are confident that this collaboration will contribute meaningfully to elevating the State's tourism and hospitality landscape.

Capacity building continues to remain one of HRAWI's foremost priorities. I am pleased to share that our FSSAI-supported FoSTaC training programmes in Ahmedabad and Goa witnessed enthusiastic participation from hospitality professionals, further reinforcing our collective commitment to food safety and regulatory compliance. Over the years, these programmes have become a cornerstone of our efforts to build a well-trained and responsible hospitality workforce equipped for evolving industry needs.

Our Knowledge Series also continues to receive an encouraging response. The recently concluded session in Goa, organised in collaboration with our Knowledge Partner, Ernst & Young (EY), provided members with valuable insights into the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) framework, GST developments, and Labour Code compliance.

As regulations continue to evolve, such initiatives play an increasingly important role in helping businesses remain informed, compliant, and future-ready in an increasingly complex operating environment.

Our FoSTaC programmes, held on 4 August at Hotel Le Grande and 5 August at Residency Hotel, Mumbai, also witnessed encouraging participation. These training sessions not only help establishments comply with statutory requirements but also reinforce a culture of food safety and operational excellence across our industry.

As we continue to navigate both challenges and opportunities, I thank each one of you for your support and active participation in HRAWI's initiatives. Together, through collaboration, knowledge, and responsible leadership, we will continue to strengthen the hospitality industry and contribute to Western India's growing tourism story.

Warm regards,

JIMMY SHAW, President, HRAWI



6 FoSTaC crosses 4,000+ milestone

Two Mumbai training sessions have pushed HRAWI's FoSTaC tally beyond 4,000 — marking a major step in strengthening food safety across hospitality.



10 A new chapter for Maharashtra

HRAWI and MTDC have entered a three-year partnership — combining industry expertise and tourism infrastructure to enhance hospitality standards across Maharashtra.



Regulation drives hospitality forward

HRAWI's 3rd Knowledge Series in Goa brought hospitality leaders together to decode DPDP, GST, and Labour Codes — building regulatory readiness now.

24 A fairer approach to food safety

Hospitality associations have urged Maharashtra FDA to ensure food safety enforcement remains corrective, transparent, and aligned with due process.



Travellers want more than hotels

From villas and holiday homes to serviced residences, India's accommodation landscape is evolving as travellers seek privacy, flexibility, and shared experiences.

Secretary General

Trupti Pawar

Editorial

Devika Jeet

devika@ddppl.com

Nisha Verma

nisha.verma@ddppl.com

Mansi Chauhan

mansi.chauhan@ddppl.com

Design Head

Neelam Verma

Marketing & Sales

Delhi

Nikhil Jeet

nikhil.jeet@ddppl.com

Meetu Malhotra

meetu.malhotra@ddppl.com

+91 9650911399

Jaspreet Kaur

jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com

+91 9650196532

Mumbai

Harshal Ashar

harshal@ddppl.com

+91 9619499167

Samantha Pereira

samantha.pereira@ddppl.com

+91 9987550769

Advertisement Designers

Nitin Kumar

Aditya Pratap Singh

Anil Khatri Chhetri

GM (Production)

Anil Kharbanda

Production Manager

Ramesh Gupta

Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India)

4, Candy House, 1st Floor, Mandlik Road,

Colaba, Mumbai - 400 001

Tel: 22024076 / 22831624 / 22819773

Fax: 22023515

E-mail: secgen@hrawi.com;

asg@hrawi.com; pa@hrawi.com

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Crossing the 4,000 milestone in food safety training

HRAWI has trained over 4,000 hospitality professionals under FSSAI's FoSTaC programme, reinforcing food safety, hygiene, and compliance across Western India.



The Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) - HRAWI has crossed a significant milestone in its ongoing efforts to strengthen food safety standards across the hospitality sector, having trained and certified 4,018 hospitality professionals under the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) programme.

Conducted in partnership with FSSAI, the FoSTaC programme equips food handlers and supervisors with practical knowledge and skills in safe food handling, hygiene, sanitation, waste management, and statutory compliance under the Food Safety and Standards Act (FSS

Act). HRAWI has been conducting FoSTaC training programmes periodically across the region to strengthen food safety standards and support regulatory compliance within the hospitality sector. The milestone follows two FoSTaC training programmes organised

Food safety is not merely a regulatory obligation – it stands for consumer trust and the long-term credibility of our sector

in Mumbai at Hotel Le Grande on August 4 and The Residency Hotel on August 5. Conducted by renowned food safety expert **Dr V Pasupathy**, Founder and CEO, Parikshan FSS Pvt Ltd, the sessions trained and certified 97 hospitality professionals, taking HRAWI's cumulative FoSTaC certifications beyond the mark.

"Crossing the milestone of training over 4,000 hospitality professionals is an achievement, but more importantly, it reflects our commitment to building a culture of food safety across the industry. Food safety is not merely a regulatory obligation – it is fundamental to consumer trust, public health, and the long-term credibility of our sector," says **Jimmy Shaw**, President, HRAWI.

Dr V Pasupathy says, "Food safety begins with knowledge and is sustained through consistent



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JIMMY SHAW
President
HRAWI

FoSTaC programme equips food handlers and supervisors with skills in safe food handling, sanitation, waste management, and statutory compliance

implementation. FoSTaC empowers professionals with practical skills and scientific understanding that help minimise food safety risks and ensure compliance with regulatory standards.”

He adds that HRAWI became the first Association in the country to set up its own food testing laboratory in 2014. In 2017, it became the first to conduct the FoSTaC programme following the launch of the initiative by FSSAI. Since then, HRAWI has facilitated the training and certification of food handlers from hotels and restaurants across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. “It is

encouraging to see the industry’s growing commitment towards continuous learning, and HRAWI deserves appreciation for consistently driving this initiative, achieving a major milestone, and making food safety training accessible to hospitality professionals across the region,” adds Dr Pasupathy.

Alongside FoSTaC training programmes, the Association continues to promote food safety best practices through awareness initiatives, workshops, guidance documents, and member advisories, reinforcing a culture



PRADEEP SHETTY
Spokesperson
HRAWI

of safe food handling across the hospitality industry.

“Through our partnership with FSSAI, we remain committed to creating awareness, strengthening capabilities, and encouraging every hospitality establishment to adopt the highest standards of hygiene and food safety. We commend the dedication of all participants and extend our gratitude to Dr V Pasupathy and FSSAI for their partnership in this endeavour. Well-trained food handlers are the strongest foundation for a safe, responsible, and future-ready hospitality industry,” concludes **Pradeep Shetty**, Spokesperson, HRAWI. ♦♦

SONO

HOTELS & RESORTS



Upping Maharashtra's game through training & advocacy

HRAWI and Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) sign MoU to strengthen hospitality standards, enhance resort operations, and drive tourism growth through collaboration, training, and industry expertise.



HRAWI Bureau

The Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI) and Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) have entered into a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen Maharashtra's hospitality ecosystem and enhance the overall tourism experience across the state.

The collaboration establishes a framework for knowledge-sharing, operational improvement, capacity building, and industry alignment, bringing together HRAWI's extensive hospitality network with MTDC's portfolio of tourism properties and resorts. The partnership reflects a shared commitment towards improving service standards, promoting sustainable practices, and creating a more future-ready



The partnership aims to elevate MTDC resorts through training, advocacy, and hospitality best practices



hospitality landscape in Maharashtra.

Under the MoU, MTDC resorts will have the opportunity to be onboarded under HRAWI's Hotel Category Membership, providing them access to a network of more than 1,300 hospitality establishments. Through this association, MTDC will gain opportunities to participate in HRAWI's events, conclaves, and networking platforms, enabling greater engagement with industry stakeholders and access to emerging trends, operational insights, and best practices.

A key highlight of the agreement is MTDC's inclusion in HRAWI's newly introduced Hotel Chain Representation Board (HCRB) — a dedicated platform designed to bring leading hotel chains and institutional hospitality entities into structured industry dialogue. MTDC will have one reserved seat on the board for its nominated representative, ensuring a formal channel for participation in policy discussions, regulatory conversations, and collaborative initiatives. The HCRB has been created to strengthen representation



Neelesh Ramesh Gatne (IAS), Managing Director, MTDC, and Jimmy Shaw, President, HRAWI



HRAWI's new HCRB platform will provide MTDC a stronger voice in industry discussions



for organised hospitality players at State and National levels. Through this platform, members can discuss challenges, contribute to policy recommendations, exchange operational knowledge, and collaborate on initiatives focused on sustainability, training, and service excellence.

The MoU also places strong emphasis on training and workforce development. HRAWI will support capacity-building initiatives for MTDC employees, covering key areas such as food safety and hygiene through FoSTaC programmes, compliance requirements including FSSAI regulations, labour laws, licensing frameworks, and guest

service excellence. Joint workshops, seminars, and certification programmes will further help strengthen operational capabilities across MTDC properties.

In addition to training support, the partnership will facilitate policy and advocacy engagement. HRAWI will represent relevant concerns of MTDC through its government advocacy platforms and support initiatives focused on ease of doing business, regulatory simplification, and creating a more efficient operating environment for hospitality businesses.

The agreement also includes collaborative branding and promotional opportunities. MTDC resorts will receive visibility through HRAWI's communication platforms, publications, website, and industry outreach initiatives. Both organisations will explore opportunities to jointly promote tourism initiatives and highlight Maharashtra's diverse destinations and hospitality offerings.

Sustainability and responsible tourism practices form another

important pillar of the partnership. HRAWI and MTDC will work towards implementing environmentally conscious initiatives, including waste management practices, green operations, and knowledge exchange on sustainable hospitality models.

Speaking on the collaboration, the association highlighted that the partnership represents an important step towards bridging government-backed tourism infrastructure with private-sector hospitality expertise. By combining MTDC's destination reach with HRAWI's industry experience, the initiative aims to create stronger operational benchmarks and improve visitor experiences across Maharashtra.

The MoU will remain valid for three years, with provisions for extension through mutual agreement between both parties. The collaboration marks a significant move towards building a more integrated hospitality ecosystem — one that supports tourism growth, enhances service standards, and strengthens Maharashtra's position as a leading tourism destination. ♦♦

Compliance isn't checking out anytime soon

Compliance is no longer a back-office function. HRAWI's third Knowledge Series in Goa highlighted why preparedness now defines successful hospitality businesses.

 **Mansi Chauhan**

The hospitality industry has always been defined by its ability to adapt. From evolving guest expectations and technological disruption to changing travel patterns and sustainability demands, hotels and restaurants have consistently reinvented themselves to remain relevant. Today, however, the industry's next major transformation is not being driven by travellers — it is being shaped by regulation.

Whether safeguarding guest data, navigating an increasingly complex tax environment, or preparing for sweeping labour reforms, hospitality businesses are entering an era where compliance is no longer a back-office obligation but a strategic business imperative. Organisations that anticipate

regulatory change, invest in systems, and strengthen governance will not only avoid penalties but also build stronger guest confidence, improve operational efficiency, and future-proof their businesses.

Recognising this shift, the Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI) hosted the third edition of its Knowledge Series on 15 July at Fortune Miramar, Goa — Member ITC Hotels' Group. Conducted in partnership with Ernst & Young (EY), the full-day programme brought together hospitality leaders to decode three of the most significant regulatory developments affecting the industry today — the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules, evolving GST reforms, and India's new Labour Codes.

Following successful editions in Pune and Mumbai, the Goa session reinforced HRAWI's commitment to

equipping its members with practical knowledge and actionable insights rather than theoretical discussions. The programme was attended by **Jack Ajit Sukhija**, President, Travel and Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG), and **Gavin Dias**, General Manager, Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC), underscoring the growing importance of collaborative industry learning.

Trust begins with data

For decades, hospitality has been built on trust. Guests willingly share personal information — from passports and government-issued identification to payment credentials, travel itineraries, dining preferences, health information, CCTV footage, and loyalty programme data — with the expectation that it will remain secure. As hotels become increasingly digitised, however,



Jack Ajit Sukhija, President, Travel and Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG), being felicitated

this trust has acquired an entirely new dimension. Today's hospitality businesses process personal data across virtually every guest touchpoint — online reservations, mobile applications, digital payments, customer relationship management platforms, third-party booking portals, marketing campaigns, and cloud-based operational systems.

The DPDP Act and the accompanying Rules fundamentally redefine how organisations collect, store, process, retain, and protect this information, making data governance a core business function rather than a purely legal responsibility.

Leading the first session, **Madhusmita Panda**, Senior Manager — Technology Consulting, Ernst & Young, explained that compliance under the DPDP framework extends far beyond drafting a privacy policy or introducing consent checkboxes.

"Hospitality businesses should strengthen consent mechanisms, data security protocols, and breach response systems, and more importantly, the reporting and accountability should be done in a timely manner. Compliance with data protection norms is critical in building consumer trust and operational resilience. Non-compliance with the DPDP Act can result in significant penalties and reputational damage," she said. Her session highlighted that organisations



Gavin Dias, General Manager, Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC), being felicitated

must establish transparent privacy notices, strengthen cyber security controls, implement robust data retention policies, and create efficient grievance redressal mechanisms while ensuring guests retain meaningful control over their personal information.

The legislation also introduces stringent timelines for breach reporting and mandates stronger organisational safeguards, including encryption, access controls, continuous monitoring, vendor management, and comprehensive

Madhusmita Panda, Senior Manager — Technology Consulting, Ernst & Young, being felicitated



MADHUSMITA PANDA,
Senior Manager — Technology
Consulting, Ernst & Young

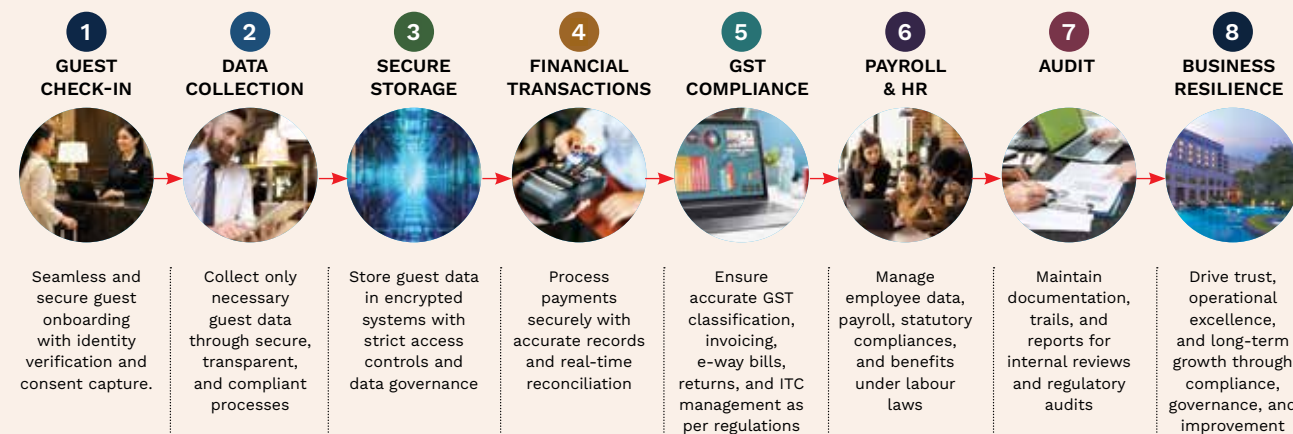
"Compliance with data protection norms is critical in building consumer trust and operational resilience. Non-compliance with the DPDP Act can result in significant penalties and reputational damage."

incident response frameworks. For hotels and restaurants, this represents a cultural shift as much as a technological one. Every department — from reservations and front office operations to human resources, finance, marketing, and information technology — must understand its role in protecting personal information.

Employees require continuous training, vendors handling guest data must meet higher compliance standards, and businesses must establish governance structures capable of responding swiftly to emerging cyber risks. Importantly, the stakes are substantial. Financial penalties under the Act can extend to hundreds of crores of rupees for serious violations, making proactive compliance significantly less expensive than the consequences of regulatory failure.

HOSPITALITY COMPLIANCE JOURNEY

From guest arrival to business resilience — every step matters





AKSHIT SARAOGI
Director – Global Trade and
Customs, Indirect Tax
Ernst & Young

"Automation of compliance, e-invoicing, and vendor communication is no longer optional – it has become essential for audit readiness under the evolving GST framework."

Demand for financial agility

If data protection is reshaping hospitality's digital responsibilities, evolving GST reforms are redefining financial management. At first glance, the revised tax structure appears favourable. Accommodation tariffs of ₹7,500 or below now attract 5 per cent GST without Input Tax Credit (ITC), while accommodation above ₹7,500 continues to attract 18 per cent GST with ITC. However, beneath this seemingly simplified framework lies significantly greater operational complexity.

During the second session, **Akshit Saraogi**, Director – Global Trade and Customs, Indirect Tax, Ernst & Young, explained that the revised framework requires hotels to fundamentally rethink how they manage taxation, accounting systems, and financial planning.

"This creates a critical challenge as hotels with lower tariff rooms lose ITC on inputs – increasing operating costs and requiring complex cost allocation and monthly ITC reversals. Tax authorities are increasingly scrutinising invoice level reconciliation, ITC reversals on exempt supplies, credit note compliance, and data retrieval during audits, making automation of compliance, e-invoicing, and vendor communication essential for audit readiness. Members are advised to review and update ERP and POS systems, and seek professional



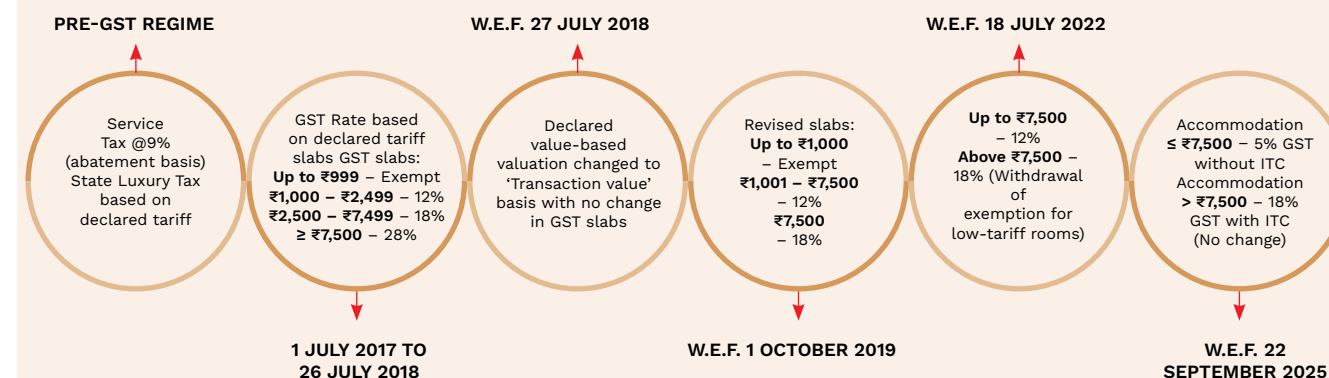
Akshit Saraogi speaking on GST Updates

guidance to navigate these changes effectively," he said.

One of the most significant changes concerns the revised definition of 'Specified Premises'. A hotel is now classified as a specified premise if any room was supplied above the prescribed tariff threshold during the preceding financial year – a seemingly straightforward change with considerable downstream implications for food and beverage taxation, Input Tax Credit eligibility, and annual compliance decisions.

Hotels must now navigate proportionate ITC reversals, annual reconciliations, revised invoicing practices, updated property management systems, and

History of GST rates for Accommodation services



ANSHUL SHUKLA
Director
EY Consulting

"Hospitality businesses should begin preparing now by restructuring compensation frameworks, modernising HR systems, and conducting comprehensive compliance readiness assessments."

evolving GST return requirements. Businesses operating across multiple tariff categories face particularly complex cost allocation exercises, requiring finance teams to closely monitor procurement, classify expenses accurately, and ensure that technology platforms reflect the revised tax structure.

The session also examined the growing expectations of tax authorities during audits. Invoice-level reconciliations, vendor compliance, Input Tax Credit matching, timely issuance of credit notes, and systematic data retention have become central to audit preparedness. Consequently, automation is increasingly viewed not as an operational convenience but as a compliance necessity.

From automated GST filings and e-invoicing solutions to integrated purchase registers, vendor communication systems, and management dashboards, digital tools are becoming indispensable in helping hospitality businesses minimise errors while improving transparency and regulatory readiness.

Biggest HR transformation

While data protection and taxation primarily affect systems and processes, India's new Labour Codes will reshape the industry's most valuable asset – its people. Consolidating 29 existing central labour legislations into four

comprehensive codes, the reforms seek to modernise employment regulation, standardise definitions, simplify compliance, and expand social security coverage across India's workforce.

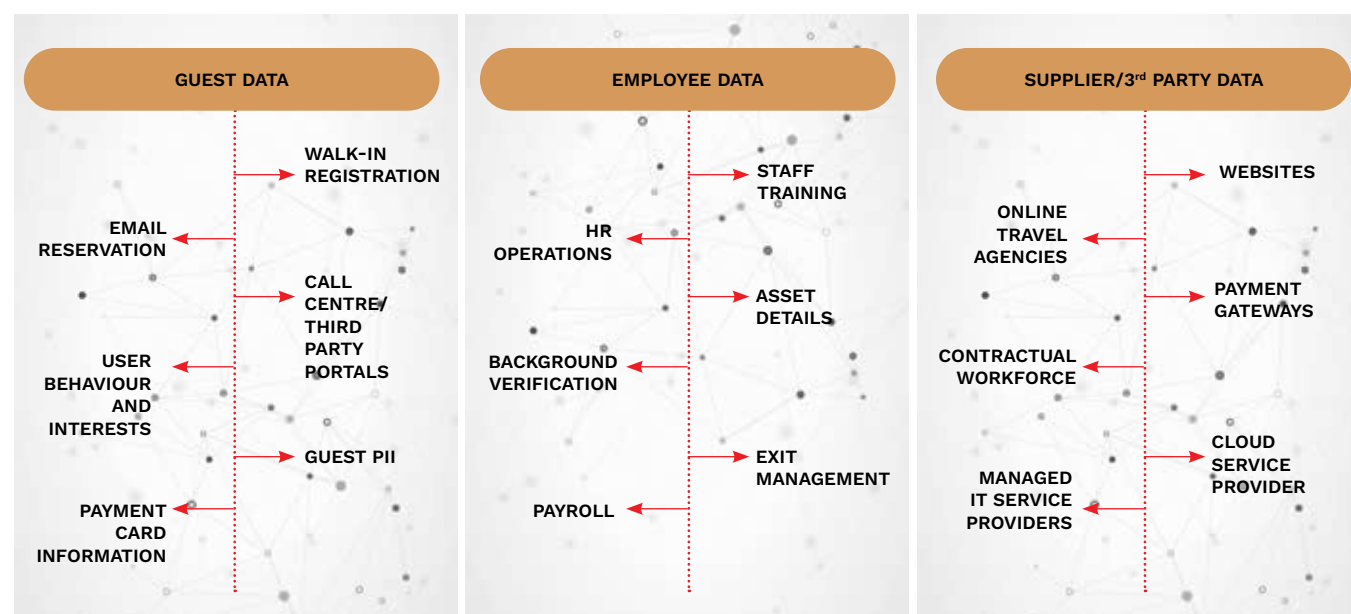
For hospitality – an industry characterised by large employee bases, seasonal staffing, outsourced services, and round-the-clock operations – the implications are particularly significant.

The session, jointly delivered by **Anshul Shukla**, Director – EY Consulting, and **Rituparna Mukhuty**, Senior Manager – Risk Consulting, EY Consulting, focused on the practical consequences for employers preparing for implementation.

Among the most significant changes is the new statutory definition of wages. Under the revised framework, prescribed exclusions – including house rent allowance, conveyance, overtime, bonuses, and several other allowances – cannot exceed 50 per cent of total remuneration.

Any amount beyond that threshold is treated as wages, directly influencing Provident Fund contributions, gratuity calculations, leave encashment, overtime payments, and statutory bonuses.

For many hospitality businesses, this could translate into a measurable increase in employment costs while requiring extensive restructuring of compensation frameworks. "For





CARL COSTA
EC Member & Area Nominee
(Goa), HRAWI

"The Knowledge Series equips hospitality leaders with the confidence to navigate emerging regulations and build a resilient, future-ready hospitality sector."

hospitality businesses, key impacts include restructuring compensation structures, reclassifying employees and workers, updating HR and payroll systems, amending employment contracts and vendor agreements, implementing the OSH Code safety standards, and establishing continuous compliance monitoring mechanisms. As State rules are still being finalised over the next 3 to 4 months, members are advised to conduct a comprehensive compliance readiness assessment, model cost impacts and prepare their systems and policies immediately," said Shukla.

Beyond wages, the Labour Codes introduce broader obligations affecting workforce classification, fixed-term employment, contractor management, workplace safety, grievance redressal mechanisms, digital registrations, and governance structures. Employers must reassess organisational hierarchies, update all the employment documentation, strengthen occupational safety measures, and align Human Resource systems with the new statutory requirements.



The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code further expands employer responsibilities through mandatory registration requirements, annual health examinations for eligible employees, standardised appointment letters, enhanced workplace safety provisions, and revised rules governing inter-State migrant workers and women employed during night shifts. Rather than waiting for final State-level



Rituparna Mukhuty, Senior Manager - Risk Consulting, EY Consulting, being felicitated

notifications, speakers encouraged organisations to begin evaluating workforce structures, modernising payroll systems, reviewing vendor contracts, and conducting compliance readiness assessments to ensure smoother implementation once the remaining provisions come into force.

Preparing hospitality

Although each session addressed a different regulatory subject, they collectively conveyed a consistent message: compliance is no longer a reactive exercise. Today's hospitality businesses must simultaneously protect personal data, strengthen financial governance, modernise workforce management, and embrace digital transformation. These responsibilities increasingly overlap, requiring integrated leadership rather than isolated departmental responses.

As the industry's representative body across western India, HRAWI views knowledge-sharing as a critical part of building this capability.

"The Knowledge Series is designed to equip hospitality leaders with the knowledge and confidence needed to navigate the new compliance requirements effectively and stay ahead of the regulatory curve. This was the third in the series with the previous two held in Pune and



Akshit Saraogi, Director - Global Trade & Customs, Indirect Tax, Ernst & Young, being felicitated

Mumbai, with more such sessions being planned over the coming months across the western region. HRAWI remains dedicated to empowering hospitality professionals with actionable insights and building a resilient, future-ready sector," concluded **Carl Costa**, Executive Committee Member & Area Nominee (Goa), HRAWI.

As hospitality continues to evolve, success will increasingly depend on more than exceptional guest experiences alone. Organisations that embed compliance into their culture, invest in technology, strengthen governance, and proactively prepare for regulatory change will be better positioned to earn trust, improve resilience, and sustain long-term growth.

In an industry built on service, the next competitive advantage may well be preparedness.



Rituparna Mukhuty discusses the practical consequences for employers



Varanasi to host India's premier hospitality convention

Supported by the Ministry of Tourism, the 56th FHRAI Annual Convention will unite policymakers, industry leaders, and innovators to shape India's hospitality future.



The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) is set to host its 56th Annual Convention from 21–23 August in Varanasi, bringing together the country's most influential policymakers, hospitality leaders, tourism stakeholders, investors, and entrepreneurs for three days of strategic discussions, networking, and collaboration.

Supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, with Uttar Pradesh Tourism as the Partner State, the convention is expected to be one of India's largest hospitality and tourism gatherings. Designed as a platform to address emerging opportunities, policy priorities, investment prospects, and innovation, the event aims to shape the next phase of growth for India's

tourism and hospitality sectors while showcasing Varanasi's unique cultural and spiritual heritage.

The prestigious gathering is expected to be inaugurated in the presence of **Yogi Adityanath**, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, as the Chief Guest. Joining him will be **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Union Minister of Tourism and Culture, Government of India; **Satish Mahana**, Speaker of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly; **Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu**, Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh; **Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo**, Deputy Chief Minister of Odisha; **Jaiveer Singh**, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Government of Uttar Pradesh; **Ravindra Jaiswal**, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Government of Uttar Pradesh; **Rohan Khaunte**, Minister for Tourism, Government of Goa; **Bhuvnesh Kumar**, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism,

Business sessions will spotlight tourism policy, AI, sustainability, MICE, gastronomy, destination weddings, and hospitality's evolving future

Government of India; **Suman Billa**, IAS, Additional Secretary and Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; and **Amrit Abhijat**, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Tourism, Culture and Religious Affairs, Government of Uttar Pradesh, alongside several other senior government officials and distinguished industry representatives.

The convention will also witness participation from some of the biggest names in global and Indian hospitality. Confirmed industry leaders include **Puneet Chhatwal**, Managing Director and CEO, IHCL (Taj Group); **Anil Chadha**, Managing Director, ITC Hotels; **Dimitris Manikis**, President and Managing Director – EMEA, Wyndham Hotels

& Resorts; **KB Kachru**, Chairman – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group; **Nikhil Sharma**, Managing Director and COO – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group; **Zubin Saxena**, Senior Vice President and Regional Head – South Asia, Hilton; **Sudeep Jain**, Managing Director – South West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts; **Rahool Macarius**, Market Managing Director – Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts; **Jatin Khanna**, CEO, Sarovar Hotels; **Vikram Lalvani**, Managing Director and CEO, Sterling Holiday Resorts; and **Vishvapreet Singh Cheema**, President, Lemon Tree Hotels, among several other prominent voices from the hospitality ecosystem.

The inaugural ceremony on 21 August will feature welcome addresses by the leadership of FHRAI

and eminent industry personalities. The evening will also host the prestigious FHRAI Bharat Gaurav Awards, recognising distinguished personalities for their outstanding contribution to the cultural and artistic heritage of Varanasi. Delegates will further enjoy cultural performances celebrating the city's timeless traditions before the inauguration of the exhibition and a networking gala dinner.

Over the course of three days, delegates will engage in a comprehensive programme of business sessions addressing the most pressing issues shaping the future of hospitality and tourism.

Discussions will focus on building resilient hospitality brands, future-ready business





strategies, spiritual, wellness, and experiential tourism, destination weddings, sustainable hospitality infrastructure, MICE tourism, gastronomy and culinary tourism, technology adoption, artificial intelligence, digital transformation, restaurant innovation, travel trade opportunities, and policy reforms aimed at improving the Ease of Doing Business across the sector.

Beyond the conference halls, the convention has been carefully curated to immerse delegates in the cultural richness and spiritual significance of Varanasi. Attendees will have the opportunity to visit Swarved Mahamandir Dham, Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple, witness the iconic Ganga Aarti at Namohat, and experience the celebrated Subah-e-Banaras Cruise Ride — offering a memorable introduction to one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities.

Commenting on the significance of the event, **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, FHRAI, said, "The convention would serve as a landmark platform for meaningful dialogue

Delegates will experience Varanasi's spiritual heritage through curated cultural tours and immersive local experiences

on the future of Indian tourism and hospitality. Hosting the gathering in the spiritual capital of India reflects FHRAI's vision of blending heritage with innovation while creating opportunities for collaboration, policy engagement, and sustainable growth." The convention will conclude with the Valedictory Session, featuring the FHRAI Excellence Awards for Hospitality Students and the Hospitality Industry.

The awards will recognise individuals and organisations that

have made significant contributions towards strengthening India's hospitality ecosystem while encouraging excellence across education and industry.

"The convention had been thoughtfully designed to encourage meaningful conversations, strengthen partnerships, and inspire new ideas that would shape the future of India's hospitality and tourism sector," said **Garish Oberoi**, Honorary Secretary, FHRAI. He emphasised that delegates from India and abroad would experience a unique combination of business engagement, cultural immersion, and diverse networking opportunities.

As India continues to strengthen its position as one of the world's fastest-growing tourism markets, the 56th FHRAI Annual Convention is expected to become a defining platform for dialogue, investment, innovation, and collaboration. The convention aims to reinforce India's commitment to sustainable tourism development while charting a clear roadmap for the industry's future growth. ♦♦



As hospitality projects become increasingly design-led, dependable sourcing partners are becoming essential to delivering functional, durable, and aesthetically cohesive interior environments across India.

Interior solutions shaping modern spaces



Interior design has become an integral component of the guest experience, influencing not only the visual identity of a property but also its functionality, durability, and operational efficiency. Mumbai-based Anchorline Global Trade Pvt Ltd operates within this specialised segment, supplying interior finishing materials to hospitality, commercial, and institutional projects across India.

Its portfolio includes carpets and carpet tiles, curtain and upholstery fabrics, SPC and LVT flooring, window blinds, as well as bed and bath linen, sourced through a network of established Indian manufacturers and mills.

The company supports projects through multiple stages of procurement — from material selection and sampling to specification, sourcing, and final delivery. This approach enables hotels, developers, architects, interior designers, and project consultants to align procurement with project timelines while maintaining consistency in design and quality.

With hospitality projects often requiring tailored specifications rather than standard retail products, emphasis is placed on transparent documentation, verified sourcing, and materials supplied according to individual project requirements. Supporting documentation, including composition details, GST invoices, and, wherever applicable, fire-

Thoughtful procurement strategies help hotels balance design aspirations, durability, compliance, and efficient project execution across developments

retardancy certifications for fabrics, contributes to greater compliance and project assurance.

As a member of the Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI), Anchorline reflects the growing importance of organised sourcing networks within India's hospitality ecosystem.

As guest expectations evolve and hotel developments become increasingly design-driven, dependable procurement partners continue to play a vital role in delivering spaces that balance aesthetics, performance, and operational practicality. ♦♦



IHG maps India growth beyond metros



India's expanding travel economy is opening new opportunities beyond the country's major metropolitan markets, prompting IHG Hotels & Resorts to pursue an ambitious development programme. As of Q1 2026, IHG operated 52 hotels in India, with a further 98 in its pipeline, and is targeting 400 operating and pipeline hotels in the country by 2030. The company's growth strategy spans established brands such as Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express, Crowne Plaza, and voco, alongside newer Luxury & Lifestyle offerings including Vignette Collection and Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants. IHG is also seeing opportunities in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, spiritual tourism hubs, leisure destinations, and infrastructure-led growth corridors. Its airport-led partnership with Adani Airport Holdings will add nearly 1,500 rooms across five hotels in Jaipur, Navi Mumbai, Mangaluru, and Thiruvananthapuram. ■

Radisson brings hotel search to ChatGPT

Hotel discovery is moving into a more conversational phase, with Radisson Hotel Group and Accenture launching an AI-powered hotel discovery app in ChatGPT. Available as @RadissonHotels, the app enables travellers to search more than 1,000 Radisson properties across over 100 countries using natural-language prompts based on destinations, amenities, and travel preferences. Users can access real-time availability, rates, hotel information, and map-based results before being directed to Radisson's website to complete bookings. The initiative forms part of the group's shift towards agentic commerce, where AI supports discovery, comparison, and decision-making within a single conversational journey. Radisson and Accenture plan to expand the platform with personalised recommendations, loyalty recognition, in-chat booking, reservation management, trip modifications, and AI concierge services, signalling a broader transformation in how travellers engage with hotel brands. ■



Taj retains global luxury brand crown

Taj has been recognised as the World's Strongest Luxury Hotel Brand for the fifth time in the Brand Finance Hotels 50 2026 report, reaffirming its position among the global luxury hospitality sector's leading brands. The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) flagship recorded a Brand Strength Index score of 93.5 out of 100 and retained its AAA+ rating. Its brand value also rose 32 per cent to US \$878 million, reflecting continued strength across key measures of brand performance. The recognition comes alongside Taj's distinction as India's Strongest Brand, highlighting the enduring relevance of its heritage and hospitality proposition. Taj currently operates 150 hotels across 14 countries, spanning palaces, city hotels, beach and spa resorts, wildlife lodges, and serviced residences. The brand's international portfolio continues to combine Indian heritage with contemporary luxury and personalised service. ■

Hilton maintains workplace leadership

Workplace culture remains a significant differentiator for global hotel companies, with Hilton retaining its position as one of India's leading employers for the fourth consecutive year. The recognition comes as the hospitality sector faces increasing competition for skilled talent amid rapid hotel development and expanding career opportunities across the country. Hilton's continued workplace ranking reflects the importance of employee engagement, professional development, and organisational culture in attracting and retaining hospitality professionals. The achievement is particularly relevant as international and domestic hotel groups accelerate expansion, creating demand for talent across operations, food and beverage, sales, technology, and management roles. For the wider industry, the recognition reinforces a broader shift in hospitality — employer reputation is becoming increasingly important not only for attracting employees, but also for building the workforce required to support sustained growth. ■

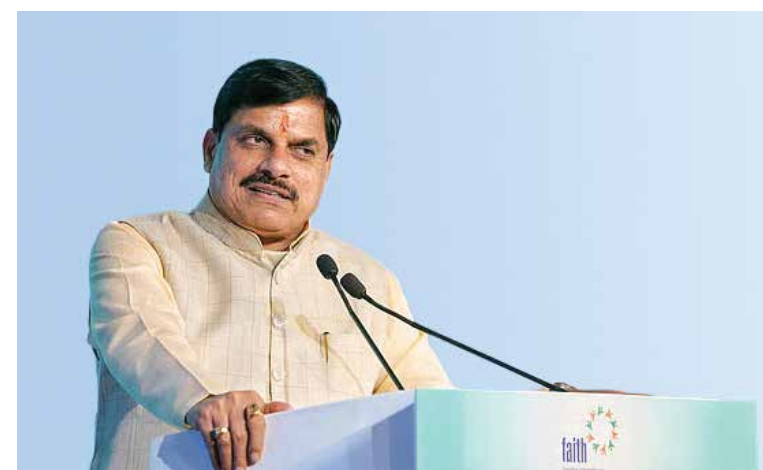


Suba Hotels crosses 100-hotel milestone

Suba Hotels has crossed 100 operational hotels while reporting its highest-ever annual revenue for FY26, marking a year of strong network and financial growth. The company recorded revenue of ₹115.89 crore for the year ended 31 March 2026, a 45 per cent increase year-on-year. EBITDA rose 13 per cent to ₹26.82 crore, while profit after tax increased 19 per cent to ₹18.01 crore.

The company's portfolio expanded to more than 102 operational hotels, comprising over 4,660 keys across 73 destinations. Suba operates across management contracts, revenue sharing, franchising, asset ownership, and hybrid structures, enabling it to pursue expansion across different markets and segments. Looking ahead, the company plans to focus on asset-light growth, operational efficiencies, and high-growth markets. ■

MP shows FAITH in tourism investment



Madhya Pradesh positioned tourism as a key investment opportunity as Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav presented the state's hospitality and tourism potential at the FAITH Conclave 2026 in New Delhi. Held on 16–17 July, the conclave brought together policymakers, tourism experts, and industry stakeholders under the theme 'Incredible India: Invaluable Economics'. Yadav highlighted opportunities across Madhya Pradesh's tourism destinations, while engaging with investors on projects and infrastructure that could support the sector's expansion. Discussions at the conclave also centred on the proposed Tourism Growth Charter, including infrastructure status for tourism, mission-mode development of 50 major destinations, stronger Brand India initiatives, and easier visa processes. The visit formed part of the state's wider investment outreach, with the government seeking to attract capital, create employment, and accelerate tourism-led economic development. ■



Regulation, reputation, and the **right to respond**

As Maharashtra's food safety enforcement intensifies, hospitality associations are urging regulators to balance strict compliance with procedural fairness, protecting both consumers and business reputations.

 **HRAWI Bureau**

Food safety is fundamental to hospitality. Every restaurant, hotel, and café has a responsibility to maintain the highest standards of hygiene, ensuring consumer trust remains uncompromised. Few would dispute the Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) renewed focus on strengthening compliance across food business establishments. However, the hospitality industry believes that enforcement must

be accompanied by procedural fairness. The Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI), the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), and the Indian Hotel and Restaurant Association (AHAR) have welcomed stricter food safety oversight while expressing concern over aspects of the current enforcement approach.

According to the associations, inspections should remain corrective rather than immediately punitive, allowing Food Business Operators (FBOs) to rectify identified


**Hospitality associations
advocate corrective
action before punitive
measures, protecting
consumer safety
and procedural
fairness equally**



**Hospitality supports
over 3.2 crore jobs in
India, making it a major
employment generator,
while food services
alone employs more
than 85 lakh people**


deficiencies before facing severe regulatory action.

Protecting trust and process
At the heart of the industry's concerns is the principle of natural justice. The associations argue that publicly identifying establishments before investigations are complete can inflict lasting reputational damage, regardless of whether corrective action is later taken or no final violation is established.

For businesses built over decades through sustained investment, compliance, and customer confidence, premature publicity can have consequences extending far beyond regulatory penalties.

The industry maintains that Section 32 of the Food Safety and Standards Act provides a clear framework by requiring Improvement Notices before licence suspension or termination. In its view, this process encourages compliance while ensuring businesses are afforded the opportunity to address shortcomings before facing the most severe enforcement measures.

Industry seeks clarity
Following its initial appeal to the Maharashtra FDA, the hospitality industry has now elevated the matter by jointly petitioning the Prime Minister, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

Rather than seeking weaker regulation, the associations have



called for enforcement that remains fully aligned with the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act and established principles of natural justice. The representation also questions aspects of the Maharashtra FDA's compliance order issued on 23 June 2026, arguing that certain provisions differ from the framework established under the Act.

The associations have requested that the statutory 14-day Improvement Notice process be consistently followed, that public disclosure of establishments be deferred until due process is complete, and that greater consultation with industry stakeholders precede significant

regulatory changes. The debate extends beyond legal interpretation. Hospitality is one of India's largest employment generators, supporting more than 3.2 crore jobs, while the food service sector alone employs over 85 lakh people. Maharashtra remains one of the country's most significant tourism markets, with ambitious investment and employment targets under its Tourism Policy 2024.

Against this backdrop, the associations caution that unpredictable enforcement and premature public naming could affect investor confidence, disrupt businesses, and threaten livelihoods, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises.

At the same time, they reaffirm that food safety is non-negotiable and have pledged continued collaboration with both the Maharashtra FDA and FSSAI through training, awareness programmes, and stakeholder engagement.

Ultimately, the industry's message is not one of resistance to regulation, but of advocating a regulatory environment where enforcement, reputation, and the right to respond coexist.

It argues that the strongest food safety framework is one that protects public health while also upholding transparency, fairness, and due process — ensuring that consumer confidence and business confidence are strengthened together. 



Reimagining hospitality education for Gen Z

FHRAI-IHM is combining practical exposure, technology, and personalised mentorship to equip students with the skills, and adaptability needed to succeed in a changing industry. **Dr Sitesh Srivastav**, Director, shares how the institute is bridging the gap between classrooms and the evolving industry.



The global hospitality sector is at a defining turning point. As Generation Z enters hotel management, culinary arts, and service operations, traditional training methods are no longer sufficient. Having grown up in a hyper-connected digital world, Gen Z learners do not want passive classroom lectures when information is readily available on their smartphones. Instead, they expect interactive, practical, and meaningful learning experiences that prepare them for real-world challenges.

To prevent young talent from leaving the sector, educational

institutions must rethink how they teach. Teachers must transition from traditional lecturers to mentors and facilitators who inspire curiosity, encourage collaboration, and support individual growth. At FHRAI-IHM, we have overhauled our curriculum to bridge the gap between conventional hospitality education and the expectations of today's learners, ensuring students graduate with both knowledge and confidence.

The four strategic pillars

Our updated teaching model is centred on four strategic pillars that emphasise active participation, industry relevance, modern

technology, and personalised guidance. The first pillar is experiential learning. Rather than relying solely on conventional lectures, we immerse students in real business challenges that reflect the realities of hospitality operations. Students work in teams to solve practical problems, while kitchens, front offices, housekeeping departments, and restaurants serve as live learning environments where theory is immediately put into practice.

The second pillar is industry-relevant technology. Hospitality continues to evolve through digital innovation, making technological competence essential for every graduate. We simplify complex subjects through short digital modules, concise case studies, and instant self-assessments that reinforce learning.

Students also train directly on current Property Management Systems (PMS), Point of Sale (POS) systems, and digital marketing tools, ensuring they develop practical skills that are immediately applicable in professional environments.

The third pillar focuses on critical thinking. Today's hospitality professionals must understand how different departments work together to deliver exceptional guest experiences. Our assignments encourage students to connect culinary operations with finance, sustainability, marketing, and service excellence. Group discussions,



Mentorship, critical thinking, and digital skills are shaping confident professionals ready to lead tomorrow's hospitality industry

collaborative projects, and debates encourage them to question outdated practices, analyse emerging industry trends, and develop informed solutions to contemporary hospitality challenges. The fourth pillar is mentorship.

At FHRAI-IHM, teachers act as individual coaches who guide students towards their career aspirations while encouraging them to take ownership of their personal and professional development. Open, two-way communication creates an environment where

students feel supported, motivated, and empowered.

Developing leaders

By aligning our teaching methods with the way Generation Z learns, FHRAI-IHM develops graduates who are prepared for real-world demands from day one. Hands-on training with live PMS and POS technologies reduces workplace induction time and accelerates on-the-job productivity. Regular exposure to high-pressure simulation exercises builds emotional resilience and adaptability, helping graduates thrive in fast-paced hotel environments.

Vision for future

Hospitality has always thrived on human connection, adaptability, and a commitment to service excellence. By supporting Gen Z through modern technology, experiential education, and empathetic mentorship, FHRAI-IHM is ensuring a seamless transition from the classroom to the workplace. In doing so, we are preparing resilient, innovative, and future-ready professionals who will lead the next chapter of the hospitality industry.

ITC hotels acquires Welcomhotel Ahmedabad



Strengthening its owned portfolio in Gujarat, ITC Hotels has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire the owner of Welcomhotel Ahmedabad for an enterprise value of ₹155 crore. The transaction involves the acquisition of a 100 per cent stake in GHK Hospitality and Infrastructures Ltd, which owns the 130-key upper-upscale property on Ashram Road. Currently operated by ITC Hotels under an Operating Services Agreement, the hotel will transition from a managed asset to an owned property upon completion of the deal, subject to customary closing conditions. The acquisition reflects the company's asset-right strategy while reinforcing its presence in one of India's fastest-growing commercial and hospitality markets. ITC Hotels said the move supports its long-term expansion plans and strengthens its portfolio across key business and leisure destinations. ■

Radisson RED debuts near Mumbai airport

Radisson Hotel Group has strengthened its expansion strategy in India with the signing of Radisson RED Mumbai International Airport, a 208-key lifestyle hotel scheduled to open by December 2026. Developed through the renovation and repositioning of an existing property, the hotel will mark the debut of the Radisson RED brand in Mumbai and become the group's eighth property in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Located four minutes from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, the hotel will offer convenient access to key commercial hubs, including Andheri MIDC, SEEPZ, Bandra Kurla Complex, and the Jio World Convention Centre. Facilities will include over 1,000 square metres of meeting and event space, an all-day dining restaurant, a bar, a deli, a swimming pool, a spa, and a fitness centre, catering to business travellers, transit guests, airline crews, and the growing MICE segment. ■

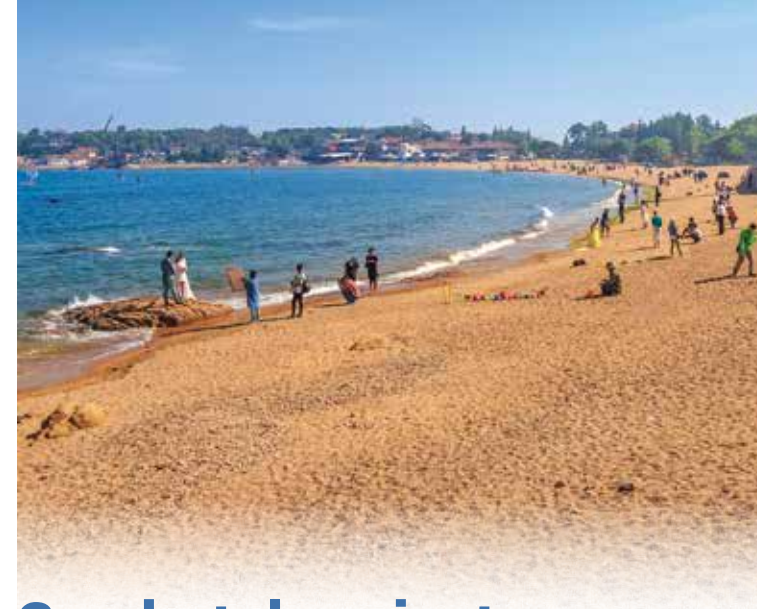


*AI-generated images. For representation purposes only



IHCL expands Ginger footprint in Sindhudurg

Continuing its expansion across high-growth destinations, Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) has signed a new 50-key Ginger hotel in Sindhudurg. The greenfield development will feature the brand's signature all-day dining restaurant, a bar, meeting facilities, a fitness centre, and other contemporary amenities designed for business and leisure travellers alike. Located along the Konkan coast, Sindhudurg has emerged as an increasingly attractive tourism destination, driven by its beaches, heritage attractions, and improving connectivity. The signing aligns with IHCL's Accelerate 2030 strategy, which focuses on expanding its portfolio across emerging markets through its Gateway, Ginger, and Tree of Life brands. With this addition, IHCL continues to broaden its presence in Maharashtra while addressing growing demand for quality midscale accommodation. ■



Goa hotel project draws opposition

The proposed integrated luxury township in North Goa, featuring a five-star hotel, has come under growing public scrutiny as residents and environmental activists continue to oppose the development over ecological and social concerns. Planned across more than 53 hectares in Bicholim taluka, the first phase of the One Goa project includes 1,388 luxury villa plots, a five-star hotel, an artificial beach, and lifestyle amenities. Protesters have called for an independent environmental impact assessment and sought greater protection for agricultural land, groundwater recharge zones, and surrounding hill ecosystems. A petition challenging the project's approvals is pending before the Bombay High Court at Goa, while the developer maintains that all statutory approvals have been secured. The development highlights the increasing importance of balancing tourism investment with environmental stewardship, regulatory compliance, and meaningful community engagement in destination planning. ■

Fern expands Maharashtra portfolio further



The Fern Hotels & Resorts has added another milestone to its Maharashtra portfolio with the signing of The Fern Residency Baramati, Series by Marriott. The 56-room hotel, expected to open in 2027, will offer contemporary accommodation, an all-day dining restaurant, banquet facilities, and other guest amenities. Located in Baramati, the property is expected to serve the town's growing business and leisure travel markets. The signing marks the group's 56th property in Maharashtra and takes its overall portfolio to 190 operational and upcoming hotels across the country. ■

Dhordo gears up for Rann Utsav

One of Gujarat's flagship tourism experiences, Rann Utsav – The Tent City, will return to Dhordo for the 2026–27 season, welcoming visitors from 1 November 2026 to 7 March 2027.

Organised by Evoke Experiences in collaboration with Gujarat Tourism, the seasonal destination offers luxury

tented accommodation alongside immersive cultural, culinary, and adventure experiences in the White Rann of Kutch. Guests can enjoy traditional folk performances, regional cuisine, artisan markets, wellness activities, guided excursions, and stargazing amid the desert landscape. This edition will also introduce

additional seasonal accommodation near Dholavira, providing greater access to the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Rann Utsav continues to play a significant role in promoting Gujarat's cultural heritage, supporting local artisans, and driving tourism-led economic growth across the Kutch region. ■



Mansi Chauhan

India's domestic tourism story is creating space for more than traditional hotel accommodation. The Ministry of Tourism's latest dashboard records 4.29 billion domestic tourist visits in 2025, up 45.6 per cent over the previous year.

But the more interesting shift is not simply how much Indians are travelling. It is how they want to stay. Families travelling together increasingly seek privacy and shared

spaces, groups want to experience destinations collectively, and companies are looking for more intimate settings for smaller offsites.

Amit Damani, Co-founder, StayVista, identifies changing travel behaviour as the biggest catalyst. "The biggest shift has been in how Indians travel," he says.

"Families and groups increasingly prefer privacy, shared spaces, and personalised experiences over booking multiple hotel rooms." Better highways, regional connectivity, digital discovery, and easier online booking have simultaneously made



AMIT DAMANI
Co-founder
StayVista

India's accommodation choices are changing

India's accommodation landscape is expanding beyond hotels, as villas, homestays, serviced apartments, and short-term rentals redefine how travellers choose where to stay across leisure destinations.

Travellers are gaining a broader menu of accommodation – and becoming more deliberate about choosing the right format

these factors have come together, making professionally managed villas a mainstream choice."

Trained staff, standard operating procedures, technology, revenue management, housekeeping, and centralised guest support are helping convert individual homes into more consistent hospitality products.

The scale of this professionalisation is increasingly difficult to overlook. StayVista, which has built a network of more than 1,000 luxury villa properties, has set an ambition to cross 5,000 properties under

accommodation can be less suited to the traveller's requirements. This is the institutionalisation Damani refers to. "It is a combination of all three, but changing consumer preferences and institutionalisation are the strongest long-term drivers," he says.

Leisure markets lead

The appeal becomes particularly clear in leisure destinations. A private pool in Lonavala, a large villa in Goa, a hillside home in Coorg, or a destination stay in Nashik can provide



leisure destinations more accessible. The result is visible across Goa, Lonavala, Khandala, Alibaug, Nashik, Coorg, Mussoorie, and other leisure markets, where villas and managed holiday homes are becoming increasingly visible alongside conventional hotels.

From homes to hospitality

India has had holiday homes and homestays for years. What is changing is the emergence of professional operations around them. "Five years ago, the demand existed, but trust and service standardisation were still evolving," Damani says. "Today,

management within five years. Damani has described the company's objective as bringing standards and organisation to a segment that has historically been unorganised and unbranded.

ELIVAAS provides another indication of the category's acceleration. The platform reached approximately 620 villas within two years of launch and plans to more than double its portfolio to over 1,200 villas in 2026. Its growth has been driven by group travel, private celebrations, and corporate offsites – precisely the occasions where conventional room-based

something that several hotel rooms cannot – a shared environment where the accommodation itself becomes part of the experience.

"Travellers increasingly want private pools, larger common spaces, personalised service, and the ability to stay together as a group," Damani says. Peak-period hotel inventory constraints can contribute to demand, but they are not the whole story. The category is scaling because consumers are increasingly choosing the format that suits the purpose of their trip. That does not necessarily mean hotels are losing their relevance.

Nirav Gandhi, Senior Vice



NIRAV GANDHI
Senior Vice President
HRAWI

The category is scaling because consumers are increasingly choosing formats that suit the purpose of their trip



President, HRAWI, says Indian travellers have recognised the quality and value offered by domestic hotels. Families, wedding guests, and corporate groups remain important demand segments, alongside leisure, wellness, and destination-led stays. The distinction, therefore, is becoming one of use case.

Hotels remain particularly relevant for business travel, transit stays, weddings, large conferences, and travellers seeking a full-service environment. Villas are naturally suited to families, celebrations, group travel, and private escapes. Serviced apartments cater to

longer urban stays, while short-term rentals provide flexibility across destinations.

Hotels are adapting too

The hotel sector is not standing still. In Lonavala and Khandala, **Madhav Todi**, Area Head - Lonavala-Khandala, HRAWI, says hotels and resorts are already diversifying beyond accommodation, placing greater emphasis on wellness, technology, and curated food and beverage experiences.

"Hotels and resorts have tried to diversify their offerings beyond accommodation, with a stronger

focus on wellness and curated food and beverage experiences," Todi says. Guests, he notes, are increasingly evaluating value, service quality, and unique experiences before deciding where to stay. That makes alternate accommodation less a threat that can simply be ignored and more a signal of where consumer expectations are moving. Todi also points to social media's role in raising those expectations.

"Social Media has also made tourists more demanding in terms of services," he says.

For hotels, the response is increasingly about creating

reasons to choose them — through wellness, technology, F&B, destination experiences, and differentiated service.

MICE finds another format

The shift is extending into corporate travel, too. Leadership offsites, strategy retreats, founder gatherings, and smaller corporate groups are increasingly looking beyond conventional conference hotels for environments that encourage interaction. Damani says StayVista is seeing a clear shift towards leadership offsites, strategy retreats, founder gatherings, and smaller corporate groups.

"Companies are no longer looking only for meeting rooms and accommodation," he says. "They want private environments that encourage collaboration, team bonding, and meaningful conversations." Villas can offer shared spaces, flexible schedules, customised meals, activities, and privacy. "As hybrid work increases the value of in-person interactions, organisations are becoming more intentional about offsites," Damani says.

The trend is not entirely unfamiliar to hotels. Todi says offsite events and marriages continue to provide important weekday business for the Lonavala-Khandala market, helping properties build occupancy beyond traditional weekend demand. For MICE planners, the emerging landscape may therefore be complementary rather than binary — hotels can deliver scale and infrastructure, while villas can provide privacy and intimacy.

Regulation enters the room

The biggest challenge may ultimately be ensuring that accommodation growth does not outpace destination infrastructure.

Todi's Lonavala-Khandala experience illustrates the issue. Better connectivity has increased tourist numbers, but infrastructure has struggled to keep pace, creating pressure on roads, waste disposal, power supply, and other public services.

He also argues that the growth of bed-and-breakfasts and homestay villas has compounded the pressure on hotels, particularly because of differences in regulation.

"Availability of skilled manpower continues to be a challenge to the hospitality industry, especially in places like Lonavala-Khandala," Todi says. "This, compounded with the increase in alternate accommodation such as bed-and-breakfasts and homestay villas, has added to the problems for hoteliers."

Hotels can deliver scale and infrastructure, while villas can provide greater privacy, flexibility, and intimacy

NITI Aayog's 2025 report, Rethinking Homestays: Navigating Policy Pathways, puts the issue into a national context.

The report examines state-level regulations for homestays and B&Bs and identifies policy gaps that need to be addressed if alternative accommodation is to realise its tourism and livelihood potential. It calls for a more inclusive, efficient, and growth-oriented policy framework.

Goa offers one practical example. Its Homestay and B&B policy seeks

to streamline registration, improve service standards, create livelihood opportunities for rural communities, encourage local sourcing, and promote hinterland tourism. The state also provides fiscal and non-fiscal incentives, training, marketing support, and quality classification for eligible properties.

That is close to Damani's own prescription: simple registration, clear safety and hygiene standards, and investment in roads, waste management, water, power, emergency services, and digital connectivity.

2030 accommodation map

By 2030, Damani expects alternate accommodation to become a mainstream pillar of Indian hospitality, with greater segmentation across luxury villas, boutique stays, wellness retreats, serviced residences, glamping properties, and design-led homes.

Growth is likely to extend beyond established destinations as connectivity improves and emerging leisure markets become more accessible. For Gandhi, however, the accommodation cannot be separated from the destination.

That may be the defining question for the next phase of Indian hospitality. The villa does not have to replace the hotel. The hotel does not have to imitate the villa.

Instead, travellers are gaining a broader menu of accommodation — and becoming more deliberate about choosing the format that fits the journey. The competition is no longer simply for the room. It is for the experience of the stay. ♦♦



MADHAV TODI
Area Head, Lonavala-Khandala, HRAWI





Goa turns up the heat on food safety standards

HRAWI conducted an FSSAI-certified FoSTaC programme in Goa, equipping 30 hospitality professionals with advanced food safety knowledge to strengthen hygiene standards and compliance.

 HRAWI Bureau

The Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI) organised the latest Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) programme at Hotel Manoshanti, Goa, on 14 July 2026. The training was inaugurated by **Praveen Andrews**, Trainer at Parikshan FSS Pvt Ltd, and **Trupti Pawar**, Secretary General, HRAWI, reinforcing the Association's continued commitment to raising food safety standards across the hospitality sector.

Conducted by Praveen Andrews, the session brought together 30 hospitality professionals for an intensive programme focused on food safety, hygiene, sanitation, food handling, and waste management.

"Food safety is the bedrock of guest trust and operational excellence in any reputed hospitality establishment, and there can be no

compromise on this aspect. HRAWI takes FoSTaC training extremely seriously and has consistently worked towards strengthening food safety standards across the hospitality industry.

We are proud to have trained the highest number of hospitality professionals through FoSTaC programmes among all hospitality trade associations in the country to date.

We remain committed to expanding these training initiatives and ensuring that our members are equipped with the latest knowledge, regulatory updates, and best practices — further strengthening consumer confidence, accountability, and industry trust — so that every guest receives the highest standards of service, hygiene, and care," said **Jimmy Shaw**, President, HRAWI.

To date, HRAWI has successfully trained and certified 3,921 hospitality professionals through

 **Goa welcomed HRAWI's latest FoSTaC initiative, promoting safer kitchens, stronger compliance, and higher guest confidence across hospitality**

FoSTaC and FSSAI's Management Training Programme. These initiatives continue to promote a strong culture of food safety while ensuring hospitality professionals remain equipped to meet evolving regulatory requirements and deliver consistently high standards of operational excellence. 

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