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DOMESTIC TOURISM TAKES CENTRE STAGE



Dear members,

Over the last few years, India's tourism landscape has undergone a significant transformation.

While international travel continues to regain momentum, it is the Indian domestic traveller who has emerged as the driving force behind the hospitality sector's growth. From spontaneous weekend getaways and destination weddings to wellness retreats, culinary journeys, and immersive local experiences, Indians are exploring their own country with renewed enthusiasm and confidence.

This momentum has received an additional boost following a clarion call by the Honourable Prime Minister, encouraging citizens to explore destinations within India and reduce outbound travel, thereby conserving valuable foreign exchange. The appeal has resonated strongly with travellers across the country, inspiring many Indians to discover the rich cultural, natural, and experiential diversity that our own nation offers.

This shift presents tremendous opportunities for the hospitality industry, particularly across Western India. Destinations once considered secondary tourism markets are today witnessing unprecedented demand. Hill stations, coastal retreats, heritage towns, pilgrimage centres, and emerging leisure destinations are benefiting from changing travel patterns and improved connectivity.

Travellers are increasingly seeking authentic experiences, personalised services, and meaningful engagement with local culture, creating new avenues for hotels, resorts, restaurants, and tourism stakeholders alike. The rise of domestic tourism is also contributing significantly to regional economic development. It is creating employment, supporting local businesses, and strengthening the broader tourism ecosystem.

As an industry, we must continue to innovate, enhance guest experiences, and invest in sustainable and responsible tourism practices to meet the expectations of this evolving traveller.

We remain committed to empowering our members through knowledge sharing, advocacy, and capacity building. In line with this commitment, we successfully organised a FoSTaC programme in Mumbai, in collaboration with the FSSAI. The programme witnessed active participation from hospitality professionals and focused on strengthening food safety practices, regulatory compliance, and operational excellence.

Building on the success of the Knowledge Series - I and II in Pune and Mumbai, HRAWI successfully hosted Knowledge Series - III on 15 July in Goa, in association with E&Y, its Knowledge Partner. The programme featured expert-led

sessions on critical areas, including the DPDP Act, GST developments, Labour Code compliance, and other key regulatory updates impacting the hospitality sector.

Such initiatives are designed to help our members navigate an increasingly complex compliance environment while enhancing operational preparedness and business resilience.

The past few months have also reinforced the importance of industry collaboration and resilience. From navigating operational challenges to adapting to changing consumer expectations, the hospitality sector continues to demonstrate remarkable agility and determination. HRAWI will continue to work closely with policymakers, regulators, and industry stakeholders to address emerging concerns, advocate for a conducive business environment, and support sustainable growth across the sector.

As we move forward, let us embrace the opportunities presented by India's growing domestic travel market and collectively contribute towards strengthening our nation's position as one of the world's most vibrant tourism destinations. I thank all our members for their continued support and participation in HRAWI's initiatives. Together, we will continue to build a stronger, more resilient, and future-ready hospitality industry.

Warm regards,

JIMMY SHAW, President, HRAWI



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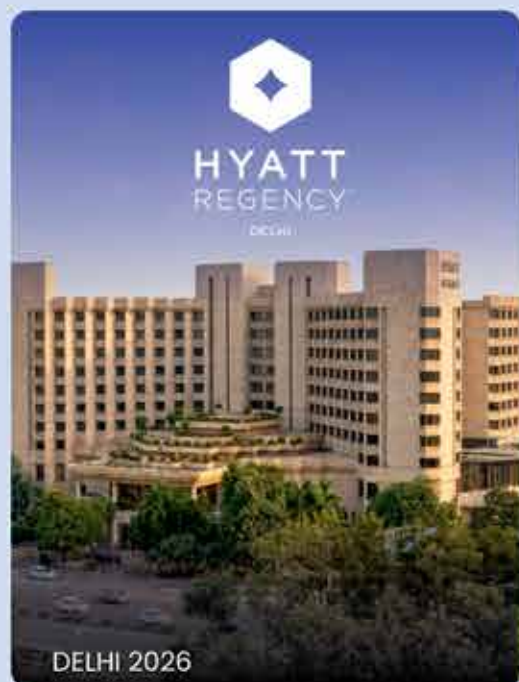
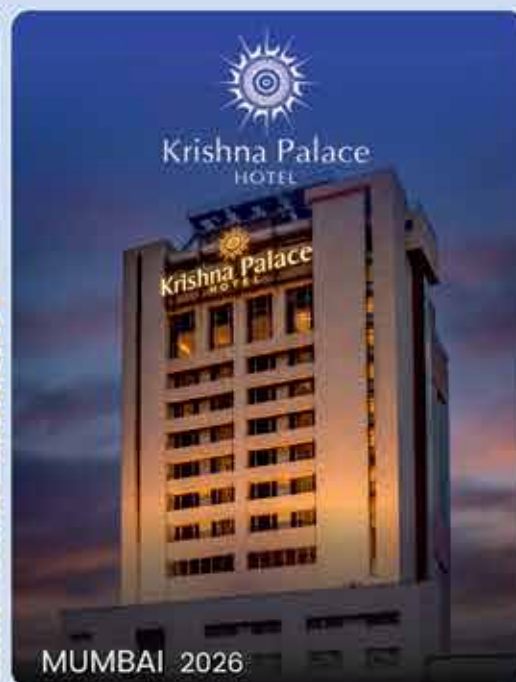
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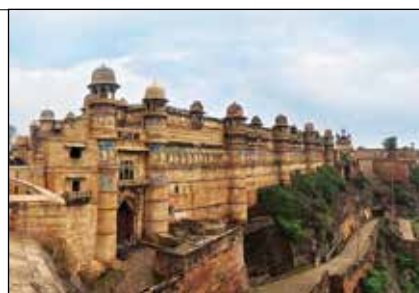
8 FoSTaC boosts food safety skills

Thirty professionals received practical training in food handling, hygiene, sanitation, waste management, and safer kitchen practices through FoSTaC.



10 Western India's local travel boom

Domestic travel is driving demand for regional experiences, wellness, weddings, local cuisine, and longer stays across Indian destinations today.



Safe kitchens start with daily discipline

FDA Maharashtra highlighted practical compliance, urging businesses to strengthen documentation, hygiene, licensing, training, and everyday food safety discipline.

24 Recognising regional stars

The Surat conclave recognised excellence across hotels, restaurants, leadership, innovation, sustainability, and regional tourism with prestigious industry awards.



New players enter hotel growth

Developers, airports, and institutional investors are accelerating hotel expansion, creating new opportunities across leisure, business, and pilgrimage destinations.

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FoSTaC programme strengthens food safety skills

Through FoSTaC and FSSAI's Management Training Programme, HRAWI has trained 3,870 professionals.



Food safety remains one of the industry's most important operational responsibilities, making regular training and certification essential for hotels, restaurants, and catering teams. Continuing this focus, The Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI) organised FSSAI's Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering, popularly known as FoSTaC, at Hotel Marine Plaza, Mumbai, on 27 May.

The session was inaugurated by **Dr V Pasupathy**, Trainer, Parikshan FSS Pvt Ltd, **Osden Henriques**, Executive Assistant Manager, Hotel Marine Plaza, **Vaishali Savale**, Human Resources Manager, Hotel Marine Plaza, and **Adhir Vinod Dabholkar**, F&B Manager, Silent Hills Resort Pvt

Ltd. The programme was conducted by Dr V Pasupathy and focused on practical food safety requirements for operations. The training was attended by 30 professionals, who received practical insights into strengthening food safety measures and reinforcing industry best practices. The session covered essential areas such as food handling, hygiene, sanitation, waste management, and the implementation of safe practices.

Through its continued collaboration with FSSAI and training partners, the association has successfully trained and certified 3,870 hospitality professionals through FoSTaC and FSSAI's Management Training Programme. The initiative is designed to promote a stronger culture of food safety across the sector and equip industry professionals with the knowledge

The initiative promotes food safety by equipping hospitality pros with essential compliance skills

and skills required to uphold high standards in daily operations.

This programme reaffirmed the Association's commitment to capacity building, regulatory awareness, and safer hospitality practices across Western India while encouraging continuous learning.

Nashik charts roadmap for Kumbh readiness

Nashik Region Owners' Meet brought stakeholders together to shape a unified roadmap for tourism growth, government engagement, and Kumbh Mela preparedness.



As Nashik prepares for one of its most important tourism opportunities in the years ahead, the city's hotel owners are beginning to look beyond individual business interests and towards a shared destination vision. That spirit of collaboration shaped Nashik Region Owners' Meet, held on 8 June at Vaaruni, Radisson Blu Hotel & Spa, Nashik.

Members discussed the need to position Nashik more prominently on India's tourism and hospitality map, not as an isolated city market, but as part of a wider regional circuit that includes Igatpuri, Shirdi, and other surrounding destinations.

The group agreed that a collaborative ecosystem would help the industry speak with one voice on infrastructure, policy, destination promotion, transportation, and

operational issues. Kumbh Mela was identified as the single biggest opportunity for Nashik's hospitality sector.

Members stressed that planning must begin well in advance and should extend beyond accommodation to include transportation, traffic management, shuttle services, parking, rate alignment, and visitor experience. Learnings from the 2015 Kumbh will also be documented to strengthen future preparedness.

The meeting further covered the accommodation inventory, corporate business development, staffing challenges, electricity and infrastructure concerns, and the need for regular stakeholder engagement.

A dedicated WhatsApp group will be created for the participants, while working groups will take forward certain key action points — including compiling hotel inventory, preparing a one-page government

Members agreed that Kumbh Mela can become a catalyst for Nashik's long-term tourism positioning

representation document while engaging transport authorities, and developing a preliminary Kumbh preparedness framework. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to strengthen Nashik's hospitality ecosystem through collaboration, structured planning, and proactive industry-government engagement.



Western India's story is being rewritten from within. While international travel continues to regain momentum, Indian travellers have emerged as one of the strongest forces shaping the sector's growth. From spontaneous weekend breaks and destination weddings to wellness

retreats, culinary journeys, and immersive local experiences, Indians are exploring their own country with renewed confidence.

This shift is especially significant for Western India, where hill stations, coastal retreats, heritage towns, pilgrimage centres, and emerging leisure destinations are witnessing fresh demand. The domestic traveller is no longer looking only for a room or a meal. Today, they are seeking

comfort, convenience, local flavour, personalised service, and meaningful engagement with the destination.

Jimmy Shaw, President, HRAWI, says, "While international travel continues to regain momentum, it is the Indian domestic traveller who has emerged as the driving force behind the hospitality sector's growth." This momentum has also been strengthened by the call to explore destinations within India.

The Great Indian Getaway goes local

Domestic tourism is reshaping Western India's hospitality sector, as travellers seek shorter breaks, regional flavours, local experiences, weddings, wellness, and destinations closer home with renewed confidence.



JIMMY SHAW
President
HRAWI

"The Indian domestic traveller has emerged as the driving force behind the hospitality sector's growth."

It has encouraged travellers to look more closely at the country's cultural, natural, and experiential diversity, opening new opportunities for hotels, resorts, restaurants, and regional tourism stakeholders.

Shaw points out, "This shift presents tremendous opportunities for the hospitality industry, particularly across Western India. Destinations once considered secondary tourism markets are today witnessing unprecedented demand. Hill stations, coastal retreats, heritage towns, pilgrimage centres, and emerging leisure destinations are benefiting from changing travel patterns and improved connectivity."

Indian guest in focus

The Indian traveller of 2026 is more informed, more demanding, and more experience-driven. Domestic travel is no longer restricted to annual family holidays or last-minute weekend breaks. It now includes weddings, business-leisure trips, wellness holidays, culinary exploration, spiritual journeys, corporate offsites, and regional leisure.

Hotels and restaurants are therefore being pushed to think beyond their traditional offerings. A

room must now come with a reason to stay longer. A restaurant must offer more than a menu. A destination must deliver more than scenery.

For regional hotel markets, the change is visible. **Nirav Gandhi**, Senior Vice President, HRAWI, observes, "Indian travellers have realised that the level of luxury offered by Indian hotels is among the best in the world, and at an affordable price."

According to Gandhi, families, wedding guests, and corporate groups are among the strongest domestic segments driving business today. He adds that guests are also showing interest in "leisure, wellness, and destination-led stays," reflecting the growing importance of experiences around the stay. However, the opportunity also comes with expectations.

Gandhi points out, "Pricing, seasonality, and expectations remain among the biggest challenges hotels face in serving the domestic traveller." For regional destinations to encourage longer stays, the offering has to become deeper. Gandhi says, "The destination should have enough activities for families and domestic travellers to be engaged in longer stays."

Regional stays rise

Nowhere is this shift more visible than in destinations such as Lonavala and Khandala. Long seen as quick escapes from Mumbai and Pune, the twin towns continue to draw domestic travellers, especially during

the monsoon. However, the nature of demand is changing. **Madhav Todi**, representing the Lonavala-Khandala regional market, says, "Change is the ultimate reality, and tourism in Lonavala-Khandala is no different. Better connectivity due to the expressway has increased the number of tourists significantly; however, this has not been matched by any increase in infrastructure, resulting in traffic jams, waste disposal issues, power failures, and quality-of-power concerns."

This mismatch between expectation and experience has become a serious concern for established destinations. While connectivity has made travel easier, civic and tourism infrastructure has not always kept pace. The result is that travellers compare destinations more sharply and expect better value for money.

Todi observes, "Hotels and resorts have tried to diversify their offerings beyond accommodation, with a stronger focus on wellness and curated food and beverage experiences, among other things, to retain existing customers and attract new ones. The market has become more competitive, with guests increasingly comparing value, service quality, and unique experiences before making booking decisions."

The monsoon remains a high-demand period for Lonavala and Khandala, but hotels are now looking beyond the seasonal rush. Weekday travel, offsite events, and weddings





DILIP KOTHARI
Honorary Tax Advisor
HRAWI

"Changing compliance expectations are time-consuming and mentally stressful for smaller regional hospitality businesses across India."

are helping properties build occupancy outside the traditional weekend cycle.

Todi says, "Lonavala-Khandala continues to be a preferred destination for offsite events and marriages. These continue to provide occupancy during weekdays. There is also an increasing trend of FITs planning their visits on weekdays because of their experiences of travel on non-peak days. This is likely to pick up and provide year-round business to people in the hospitality business."

At the same time, he warns that destinations cannot rely only on natural demand. He points out, "The current period — the monsoon — is of high demand, so selling hotel inventory is not going to be a problem. Hotel owners will, however, have to draw up their plans to attract attention post this period."

Roadblocks to growth

The growth of domestic tourism has put a spotlight on infrastructure. Popular destinations may attract visitors, but without strong roads, power supply, sanitation, transport systems, waste management, and public amenities, the guest experience can suffer. Todi is candid about the issue. He says, "The twin towns of

Lonavala-Khandala face the same issues as any other popular or growing tourist destination, compounded by government apathy in policy making and implementation. Power supply continues to be disrupted regularly, as it is distributed through old overhead transmission lines. There is no sewage disposal system in most of Lonavala-Khandala, and solid waste disposal continues to be a challenge."

He further observes that road congestion and transport issues are affecting traveller sentiment. "Roads are not widened to cater to increased tourist footfalls. Unless there is a big push on infrastructure, the hospitality sector is likely to suffer," he says.

The rise of alternate accommodation has also intensified competition for organised hotels. While hotels remain highly regulated, villas, homestays, and bed-and-breakfast formats often operate with fewer regulatory requirements.

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

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PRADEEP SHETTY
Spokesperson
HRAWI

“Food has evolved from travel necessity to one of its primary attractions for Indian tourists.”

have little regulation compared to the over-regulated hotel segment.”

Food becomes the draw

Domestic tourism is not only filling hotel rooms. It is also changing the way restaurants are seen in the travel ecosystem. Food has moved from being a necessity during travel to becoming one of the reasons people choose, remember, and revisit destinations.

Pradeep Shetty, Spokesperson, Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) - HRAWI, says, “Domestic tourism has emerged as one of the strongest growth drivers for India’s restaurant industry. With more Indians travelling for leisure, business, weddings, religious pilgrimages, wellness retreats, and short weekend getaways, restaurants across metropolitan cities, tier-II, and tier-III destinations are witnessing a steady increase in customer footfalls.”

In cities, this demand is supporting fine dining restaurants, cafés, quick-service restaurants, and experiential dining concepts. In regional destinations, the opportunity is tied more closely to local food and authenticity. Shetty points out,



“Food today has evolved from being a necessity during travel to becoming one of its primary attractions. This has given rise to culinary tourism, where travellers actively seek unique dining experiences as an integral part of their journey.”

The Indian traveller is also becoming more curious about regional cuisine and legacy restaurants. Local food is now part of destination discovery, especially among travellers who research signature dishes, iconic eateries, and culinary trails before planning their visits.

Shetty says, “Indian travellers today are far more discerning and experience-driven than ever before. There is a visible shift towards exploring authentic regional cuisines, heritage restaurants, iconic local eateries, and traditional recipes that offer a genuine sense of place. Dining has become an important element of destination discovery rather than merely a routine part of travel.”

This gives restaurants a larger role in tourism. They are no longer only dining spaces; they can become cultural ambassadors for a destination. Shetty observes, “Restaurants have the potential to become cultural ambassadors for destinations by showcasing the history, traditions, and flavours that define a region. Every destination has a unique culinary identity, and restaurants play a vital role

in preserving and presenting that identity to visitors.” He further adds, “Just as iconic monuments and natural attractions attract visitors, renowned restaurants and signature regional cuisines can become compelling reasons for tourists to visit and revisit a destination.”

Margins under pressure

Yet, growth in domestic tourism does not automatically translate



MADHAV TODDI
Area Head
Lonavala-Khandala, HRAWI

“Better connectivity has increased tourist numbers, but infra has not kept pace in Lonavala-Khandala.”



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NIRAV GANDHI
Senior Vice President
HRAWI

“Indian hotels offer world-class luxury at affordable prices, changing how domestic travellers view local stays.”



into healthier margins. Restaurants continue to face rising operating costs, staffing challenges, licensing requirements, delivery platform pressures, and changing customer expectations.

Shetty says, “While the restaurant industry continues to benefit from growing domestic tourism and changing consumer preferences, it is simultaneously grappling with multiple structural and operational challenges that are putting considerable pressure on profitability.” He explains that rentals, utility expenses, food inflation,

employee wages, and compliance costs have all risen sharply. Skilled manpower continues to be a concern, while customers expect better quality, service, value, sustainability, and digital engagement.

Shetty points out, “The rapid growth of food delivery platforms has further transformed the operating environment. While these platforms have expanded market access, restaurants face increasing pressure from high commission structures, deep discounting expectations, and the need to maintain consistent quality and service standards across both dine-in and delivery channels.”

For the restaurant sector to benefit more meaningfully from domestic tourism, policy support will be crucial. Shetty says, “Key priorities include rationalisation of GST, simplification of licensing and regulatory compliance, improved tourism infrastructure, and stronger destination marketing that positions local cuisine alongside cultural and natural attractions.”

Compliance for growth

As hotels and restaurants expand their offerings for domestic travellers, compliance is becoming an unavoidable part of business readiness. Taxation, licences, food safety, fire safety, documentation, and regulatory filings can affect both large and small operators, but the

burden is often heavier on smaller and regional businesses.

Dilip Kothari, Honorary Tax Advisor, HRAWI, says, “As domestic tourism grows, hotels and restaurants need to watch key tax and compliance concerns such as GST, licences including Fire NOC and FSSAI, and the new requirement of submitting the ASISSE return under the Collection of Statistics Act.”

He adds that smaller businesses may not be fully prepared for these expectations. Kothari observes, “For smaller and regional hospitality businesses, changing compliance expectations are time-consuming and mentally stressful.”

Simplification, he believes, is essential. Kothari says, “Taxation, licensing, and compliance processes can become more supportive of hospitality growth by simplifying tax rates and tax compliance, and removing complexity in the tax structure.”

HRAWI’s own initiatives also reflect this need for preparedness. The association has been focusing on food safety, regulatory compliance, and knowledge sharing through programmes such as FoSTaC and its Knowledge Series.

The next Knowledge Series, scheduled for July 2026 in Goa in association with E&Y, will cover areas including the DPDP Act, GST developments, Labour Code compliance, and other regulatory updates. Shaw says, “Such initiatives are designed to help our



Domestic travellers are pushing hotels and restaurants to rethink rooms, meals, experiences, and regional storytelling

members navigate an increasingly complex compliance environment while enhancing operational and business resilience.”

Making India stay longer

The rise of domestic tourism is one of the strongest opportunities before

Western India’s hospitality industry. However, the next phase will depend on how well the sector converts demand into repeat business, higher spends, and stronger destination loyalty.

For hotels, this means moving beyond stays to experiences. For restaurants, it means becoming part of the destination identity. For regional markets, it means improving infrastructure and creating reasons for travellers to stay longer. For policymakers and associations, it means making the operating environment easier, more consistent, and more growth-friendly.

Todi says, “Hotels continue to feel the pulse of their guests and keep adapting to changing customer preferences, which include wellness centres, adopting the latest technologies for enhanced experience, and experimenting with food and beverage options to provide higher levels of guest satisfaction.”

Shaw concludes, “As we move forward, let us embrace the opportunities presented by India’s growing domestic travel market and collectively contribute towards strengthening our nation’s position as one of the world’s most vibrant tourism destinations.”

India is checking in – not just to hotels and restaurants, but to its own destinations, flavours, celebrations, and local stories. For hospitality, this is more than a travel trend. It is the next big domestic opportunity, driven by demand. ♦♦



Small checks prevent bigger operational risks

The FDA Maharashtra awareness programme offered hotels, restaurants, cloud kitchens, and caterers a practical reminder that food safety compliance begins with daily discipline.



across Maharashtra. The tone was clear: enforcement is important, but awareness comes first.

The objective was not to create fear among operators, but to bring them onto the same page as regulators. The discussion underlined that the Food Safety and Standards Act and its regulations have existed for years, but gaps often arise because of lack of awareness, constraints, or weak documentation.

One of the first areas discussed was licensing. Food business operators were reminded that an FSSAI licence is conditional and must be valid, updated, and displayed prominently at the premises. The certificate, or its printout, should be placed at the entrance or billing counter in a way visible to consumers and inspectors. The session also cautioned operators against sharing FoSCoS login details with agents.

The programme highlighted timely renewal and accurate information. Businesses were advised to monitor licence validity, renew within the permitted window, and update any change in business activity, product category, or responsible person through the Food Safety Compliance System. Compliance should not depend on memory or last-minute action. It must be built into every establishment's calendar.

Water safety formed another key part of the discussion. Establishments were reminded that potable drinking water must be available free of cost and that businesses cannot represent bottled water as the only option. Water served to customers, and used for washing utensils and equipment, must meet potable standards. Regular testing, purification systems, and



documented tank-cleaning schedules were identified as essential.

Inside the kitchen, the focus moved to hygiene, layout, and segregation. The programme stressed smooth, non-absorbent walls and floors, effective ventilation, shatter-proof lighting, clean workstations, and hand-washing facilities. Segregation of raw and cooked food, vegetarian and non-vegetarian items, and ready-to-eat products was discussed as non-negotiable in preventing cross-contamination.

Storage practices received attention. Operators were reminded to follow first-in, first-out and first-expired, first-out systems, check expiry dates, label transferred products properly, and maintain temperature logs for chillers and freezers. The session noted that unlabelled containers, expired condiments, or poor stock rotation can become concerns during inspection. Supplier accountability was another

The session covered clean kitchens, safe food storage, hygiene, ventilation, and avoiding cross-contamination

major theme. Food businesses were advised to procure raw material only from licensed or registered suppliers, retain invoices, verify labels, and maintain traceability. If an unsafe ingredient enters the kitchen, responsibility does not end with the supplier. The establishment using that ingredient may also be answerable.

The training further covered pest control, waste management,

packaging, used cooking oil, and modern food formats. Valid pest-control contracts, grease-trap cleaning, lidded waste bins, approved food-grade packaging, and proper handling of used cooking oil were discussed as routine responsibilities. Cloud kitchens were reminded that absence of direct customer interface does not reduce their compliance burden. Each brand, outlet, and central kitchen must maintain licences, records, traceability, and hygiene systems.

Food handlers must follow personal hygiene standards, wear clean uniforms, avoid jewellery and nail polish, use gloves where required, and undergo medical fitness checks. Trained food safety supervisors, FoSTaC certification, and staff sensitisation were presented as safeguards. The larger message was that food safety is not a one-time inspection exercise. It is a culture built through records, routines, training, and accountability. For hotels and restaurants, compliance must sit alongside guest experience, aesthetics, and commercial priorities.

As Maharashtra's food sector expands through hotels, restaurants, cloud kitchens, cafés, banquets, and delivery formats, such programmes help align the industry with regulatory expectations.

For hospitality businesses, the takeaway is clear: food safety begins long before the plate reaches the guest. It begins with the licence on the wall, the water in the glass, the supplier invoice, the cleaning schedule, the staff record, and the discipline of doing the basics. ♦♦



 HRAWI Bureau

Food safety rarely fails in one dramatic moment. More often, it is weakened by small gaps — an expired licence, an undisplayed certificate, an unchecked supplier, a cleaning record without a schedule, or a refrigerator where raw and cooked food sit too close to each other. This was the central message at the FDA Maharashtra Food Safety Training Programme, which placed practical compliance at the heart of operations.

Led by **Anupamaa Balasaheb Patil**, Assistant Commissioner of Food, Greater Mumbai, Food and Drug Administration, Maharashtra State, the session focused on the responsibilities of food service

Businesses were reminded to keep FSSAI licences valid, updated, and clearly displayed on the premises

establishments under the Food Safety and Standards framework. It addressed hotels, restaurants, sweet shops, dhabas, canteens, cloud kitchens, banquet halls, juice bars, cafés, and caterers



Avyukta brings legacy into modern home design

From a humble Borivali provision store founded in 1947, Avyukta has grown into a complete home solutions destination rooted in trust, quality, and transparency.



The journey of Shree Shanti Group began on 15 August 1947, when Late Shri Dalichand D Jain and Late Smt Badamiben D Jain founded Shree Shanti Store in Borivali, Mumbai. What started as a modest provision store gradually expanded into hardware, paints, and building materials, earning the confidence of generations through consistent service, integrity, and dependable product knowledge.

In 1980, Tejraj Dalichand Jain, also known as Mahendra Jain, joined the business and carried forward the family's entrepreneurial vision. From a 250 sq ft shop in 1988, he steadily developed a diversified enterprise across tiles, sanitaryware, bath fittings, paints, hardware,

construction materials, and home improvement solutions, laying the groundwork for the Group's future growth.

The third generation added a sharper contemporary focus. Rohit Tejraj Jain joined in 2007, driving digital and experiential retail



With 23 curated categories under one roof, Avyukta offers a complete destination for modern home solutions



transformation, while Rahul Tejraj Jain joined in 2015, strengthening the real estate vertical through Avyukta Realty. Together, they shaped Avyukta as a brand built on clarity, transparency, and trust.

Launched in 2024, the 13,500 sq ft Avyukta Beautiful Homes Signature Store in Borivali marked a milestone as Asian Paints' first Signature Store in India. With 23 curated categories under one roof, the store brings together solutions across surfaces, décor, bathrooms, kitchens, lighting, furnishings, automation, and security.

Complemented by Avyukta.co.in, which offers over 16,000 products with pan-India delivery, Avyukta today serves homeowners, architects, interior designers, restaurateurs, hoteliers, and builders seeking beautiful, functional, and inspiring spaces, with practical guidance for every stage of space creation.

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Hourly rooms strike a chord in India



Hourly and short-stay hotel bookings are gaining ground as Indian travellers look for flexible rooms. Platforms such as Bag2Bag, Brevistay, MiStay, Hourly Rooms, and Qwiksta are helping hotels monetise inventory that would otherwise remain vacant between standard check-in cycles. Bag2Bag has seen hourly-stay revenue rise from about ₹50 lakh in 2021 to ₹5-6 crore, while listing more than 10,000 properties across India. Brevistay reports 15 lakh registered users, 4 lakh monthly active users, and around 11,000 listed hotels. The model is also moving beyond old perceptions, with demand now coming from couples, business travellers, transit passengers, students, and day-use guests. For hotels, the appeal is practical: the same room can earn additional revenue during idle daytime hours without replacing overnight business. This suits India's busy urban, airport, and station-adjacent markets particularly well. ■

New rules define gig worker eligibility

Gig and platform workers will need to work at least 90 days a year with one aggregator to qualify for social security benefits under the final rules framed under the Code on Social Security. For workers engaged across multiple aggregators, the threshold will be 120 days, with workdays counted cumulatively across platforms. The rules define eligible gig and platform workers as those engaged by an aggregator directly, through an associate, holding or subsidiary company, or through a third party. Any income earned from an aggregator on a day will count as one day of engagement with that platform.

Aggregators will also be required to upload worker details on the central government portal within 45 days and record new appointments and exits regularly. Those failing to make required contributions may face annual interest of 12 per cent. Eligibility will cease once workers turn 60 or fail to meet the threshold annually. ■



India gets a taste of Sand & Koal

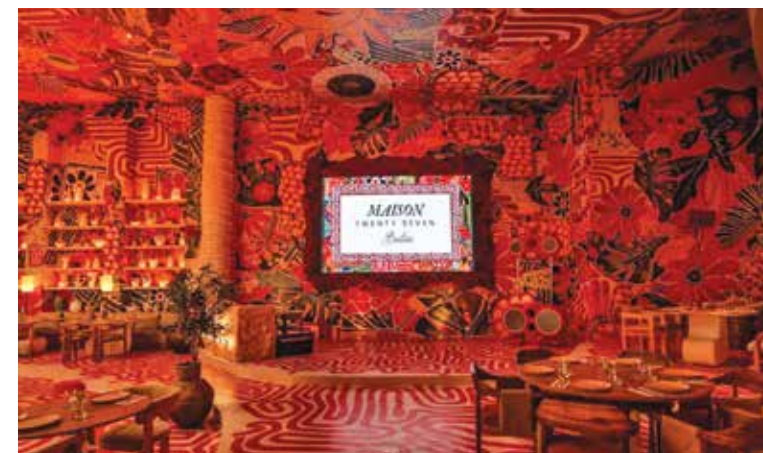
Oberoi Hotels & Resorts hosted a four-day culinary showcase by **Chef Jack Jarrot**, Head Chef, Sand & Koal at Emirates Palace Mandarin Oriental, Abu Dhabi. The Michelin Guide-listed restaurant, known for its open-fire cooking, was brought to India through special dining events at Fenix, The Oberoi, Mumbai, and threesixtyone°, The Oberoi, Gurgaon.

The showcase was part of the ongoing alliance between Oberoi Hotels & Resorts and Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group. It introduced Indian diners to Sand & Koal's Arabian-inspired flavours, with a menu built around fire-led techniques and seasonal ingredients. Signature dishes included Charred Boneless Chicken, Saffron Rice Dolma, and Dry-Spiced Seabass.

Chef Jarrot, who trained under Gordon Ramsay in London, has worked extensively in the UAE dining scene. The Mumbai leg was held on 18 and 19 June for lunch and dinner, followed by the Gurgaon experience for National Capital Region diners. ■

Maison Twenty-Seven lands at Ahmedabad airport

A dani Airport Holdings Limited and Bastian Hospitality have launched Maison Twenty-Seven adjoining the arrivals area of Terminal 2 at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, Ahmedabad. Spread across 52,000 sq ft, the integrated destination brings together dining, wellness, fitness, recovery, entertainment, and curated lifestyle experiences under one roof. Located near GIFT City, Maison Twenty-Seven is designed as an airport-integrated hospitality, wellness, and entertainment destination for travellers, business professionals, families, and Ahmedabad residents. The concept combines transit meals, business dining, family experiences, late-night indulgence, wellness-focused nutrition, and casual coffee moments. The wellness offering includes cryotherapy, HBOT, hot and cold plunge pools, steam and sauna rooms, dry flotation therapies, yoga and sound-healing studios, salon experiences, and indoor and outdoor fitness spaces. ■



AI rewrites the book on hotel searches

Hotels are preparing for a shift in travel discovery as more guests use artificial intelligence to plan holidays and shortlist properties. According to a Boston Consulting Group research cited in the report, around 37 per cent of travellers are already using AI-enabled online travel sites to plan and book trips. This creates a new visibility challenge because AI recommendations often show fewer options than traditional search results. Hotels are therefore expected to strengthen their digital footprints with complete, consistent, and high-trust information across websites, booking platforms, reviews, and content sources. Detailed property attributes, verified guest feedback, and richer responses to traveller queries could become critical as AI-led discovery begins influencing bookings more directly for hotels overall. ■

Goa's hotel boom faces staffing stress



Goa's hotel sector continues to benefit from strong travel demand, but attrition and skill gaps are creating operational pressure for properties across the state. Goa received more than 1 crore arrivals in 2025, yet hotels are increasingly losing trained staff to Dubai, Singapore, and cruise lines offering better wages and working conditions. Industry voices highlighted that building a hotel may take two years, while developing a deeply trained workforce can take far longer. Data cited by EHL Hospitality Business School indicated that branded hotels may need 100,000 to 150,000 new skilled workers annually until 2029. As hotel development expands into tier-II and tier-III destinations, demand for trained teams is rising across regions. Operators are responding, but retention will remain central to service quality and guest experience across Goa's wider market. ■

Awardees of HRAWI's 7th Conclave

The Surat conclave brought together stakeholders to revisit priorities around compliance, safety, sustainability, and regional hospitality growth.

Marking its presence in Surat after successful editions, the Surat conclave reflected the city's growing importance in the hospitality landscape. A key highlight was the panel discussion that revisited operational concerns such as adulteration in dairy and raw

materials, fire prevention through maintenance and housekeeping, and the growing relevance of induction. The conclave also featured a presentation by BRCM College of Business Administration, focusing on tourism development in the Surat Economic Region in alignment with NITI Aayog's Economic Master Plan.

The event concluded with the 7th HRAWI Awards 2026, recognising excellence, innovation, leadership, and legacy across Surat and South Gujarat's hospitality sector. The conclave served as a platform not only for recognition but also for reinforcing industry priorities around safety, compliance, and sustainable growth.



Lifetime Achievement Award

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi, President, SGCCI and Sumit Kumar, Pr ADG, DGTS, MZU, Customs & Central Excise Department, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, the Lifetime Achievement Award was conferred on Bharat Shah, Managing Director, Central Beacon, Surat. Shah has contributed to Surat's business ecosystem through decades of enterprise, ethical leadership, and commitment to excellence. The recognition honoured his sustained contribution to growth, innovation, community engagement, and the larger hospitality landscape of Surat.■



The Most Iconic Hotel in Surat - Marriott Surat

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi, this award was received by Amit Mehta, General Manager, and Team Marriott Surat. Set along the banks of the Tapi River, the hotel is recognised for its refined five-star hospitality, dining experiences, and service standards. The award acknowledged Marriott Surat's position as a landmark hospitality destination for business and leisure travellers in the city with modern facilities, premium amenities, and unwavering commitment to guest satisfaction across every stay.■



Best Luxury Stay in Surat - Regenta The World

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Jagddev, General Manager, and Team Regenta The World. Known for its elegant design, warm service, and all-vegetarian dining experience, the property has built a strong presence as a preferred destination for business and leisure guests. The award recognised its contribution to luxury hospitality, comfort, and family-friendly guest experiences in Surat delivering elevated hospitality with comfort, elegance, and authenticity.■



Felicitation - Chander Baljee, Royal Orchid Hotels

Chander Baljee, Managing Director, Royal Orchid Hotels, was felicitated for hosting the grand event and for his support, hospitality, and outstanding contribution to the hospitality sector. As Baljee was unable to attend, the memento was received on his behalf by Rakesh Dogra, AVP - Operations (Gujarat). The felicitation was presented by Nirav Gandhi, Senior Vice President, HRAWI, as a gesture of appreciation for his continued contribution to the industry and commitment to excellence throughout.■



Most Restaurant Property Entrepreneur - Aamir Ali & Partners

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Aamir Ali and Partners, Orange International. Known for commitment, customer satisfaction, and entrepreneurial spirit, the team has built a strong presence through service and quality. The award celebrated their contribution to South Gujarat's evolving restaurant property landscape and their role in strengthening regional hospitality enterprise with sustained growth and innovation, through through operational excellence.■



Felicitation - Sanat Relia, SHARA

Arun Shetty, President, and Sanat Relia, Vice President, Southern Gujarat Hotel & Restaurant Association (SHARA), were felicitated for their contribution and their leadership in strengthening the regional industry fraternity. Through their active roles, they have fostered collaboration, representation, and engagement among stakeholders across South Gujarat. The recognition honoured their continued commitment to supporting association-led initiatives, strengthening the local hospitality ecosystem, and building connections.■



Sustainable Green Hospitality Award - Courtyard by Marriott Surat

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Hemang Parmar, General Manager, and Team, Courtyard By Marriott Surat. Strategically located in Surat's industrial corridor, the hotel combines contemporary comfort with refined dining, seamless service, and modern amenities. The recognition celebrated its contribution to responsible, quality-led hospitality and its role in setting strong benchmarks for service excellence.■



Best Renovation With New Opening in Surat - Le Meridien

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Prakash Gajera, General Manager, and Manoj Jangid, General Manager, Le Meridien. Located in Vesu near the airport on Dumas Road, it is known for its five-star positioning, vegetarian offering, extensive banquet facilities, spa, and Olympic-sized swimming pool. The award recognised its refreshed presence, renewed facilities, and contribution to Surat's evolving luxury hotel landscape.■



The Best New Hotel in Surat - Hilton Garden Inn

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Bharat Gajera, Managing Director, and Tulsi Nayak, General Manager, Hilton Garden Inn. Located near Surat Railway Station, the hotel offers 104 modern rooms, a rooftop pool, fitness centre, and restaurant. The recognition highlighted its central location, contemporary facilities, and relevance for travellers seeking convenience, comfort, and value in the city.■



The Best New Hotel in Surat - Park Inn by Radisson

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Manvir Singh Thakur, General Manager, Park Inn By Radisson. Opened in 2022, the seven-storey hotel in Adajan district offers 90 rooms, a multi-cuisine restaurant, fitness centre, front desk services, and meeting facilities for up to 200 guests. The award acknowledged its contribution to business travel and modern midscale hospitality in Surat meeting evolving needs of corporate travellers daily.■



The Best Wedding Destination - Uday Palace by Radisson, Navsari

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Binu Rajendran Pillai, General Manager, Uday Palace by Radisson, Navsari. Located along NH-48, the property is recognised for luxury accommodation, banquet spaces, and destination wedding facilities serving Navsari and neighbouring regions. The award celebrated its role as a landmark venue for grand celebrations, social gatherings, and premium hospitality experiences.■



The Best Wedding Destination in Surat - Vedik Resort

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Abhishek Agarwal, Managing Director, Vedik Resort. Nestled in serene natural surroundings, Vedik Resort blends landscape, ethno-modern design, comfort, and event infrastructure. The recognition honoured its position as a preferred destination for weddings and grand celebrations in Surat, offering guests a mix of nature, elegance, expansive spaces, and carefully curated celebration experiences.■



The Best Marriage Vatika in Surat - Shreeji Vatika

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Hareesh Mehta, Managing Director, Shreeji Vatika, and Fenil Relia. Located on Piplod-Dumas Road, Shreeji Vatika is known for convenience, warm hospitality, well-appointed rooms, and versatile event spaces. The award recognised its appeal for families, business travellers, and celebrations, along with its accessibility to important city destinations serving guests with comfort, care, and consistency.■



Best New Resort - Fern Vishranta Resort, Kamrej

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Manish Desai, General Manager, Fern Vishranta Resort, Kamrej. Located along NH-48 amid Kamrej's scenic surroundings, the resort offers expansive banquet facilities, lush lawns, luxury, space, and modern amenities. The award celebrated its emergence as a promising destination for grand celebrations, leisure breaks, relaxed stays, and memorable guest experiences in the Surat region.■



Best Boutique Hotel in Surat - Bougainvilla

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Girish Patel and Sampat Patel, Managing Directors, Bougainvilla. The property offers a serene, home-style stay experience with thoughtfully designed spaces, personalised comfort, and a peaceful ambience. The recognition acknowledged Bougainvilla's distinct boutique character, warm hospitality, and appeal among discerning travellers seeking intimate, well-designed accommodation in Surat.■



The Biggest Luxury Club - Avadh Utopia, Surat & Vapi

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Dilip Unghad and Ajay Unghad, Managing Directors, and Vikas Sharma, General Manager, Avadh Utopia, Surat & Vapi. A major lifestyle and leisure destination, Avadh Utopia offers club facilities, curated dining, luxury accommodation, and more. The award recognised its contribution to experiential hospitality, celebration-led leisure, and premium club culture in South Gujarat. ■



Pioneer Entrepreneur in Saputara - Upendra Patel

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award honoured Upendra Patel, Managing Director, Hotel Patang, Akar Lords Inn, and Sunotel. Recognised as a pioneering entrepreneur in Saputara, Patel has contributed to tourism and hospitality development in the region through vision, persistence, and enterprise-led growth, creating employment, attracting visitors, and strengthening Saputara's tourism economy through hospitality. ■



Most Friendly Owner in Saputara - Mahendra Katargamwala

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Mahendra Katargamwala, Managing Director, Shilpi Hill Resort. Known for his warmth, humility, and guest-first approach, Katargamwala has created a strong impression among visitors. The recognition celebrated his personal contribution to welcoming hospitality, memorable guest interactions, and the spirit of care that defines successful hotel ownership in a hill destination. ■



Best Culinary Titan in Surat - Richie Rich

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Bhavesh Shah, Managing Director, Richie Rich. Located at Parle Point, Richie Rich is one of Surat's established hospitality names, known for multi-cuisine offerings, scale, seating capacity, and a long-standing dining legacy. The award recognised the continued evolution, consistent culinary appeal, and enduring position as a landmark restaurant brand in Surat's food and dining landscape, serving generations. ■



Best Mixology Master in Surat - Coffee Culture

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Gaurav Narang, Managing Director, Coffee Culture. The café chain is recognised for stylish interiors, a relaxed vibe, premium coffee experiences, and strong appeal among youth and professionals. The award acknowledged its role in shaping Surat's café culture, creating social dining spaces, and blending ambience, comfort, and contemporary beverage-led hospitality. ■



Café With Best Ambience and Mood - Café De Meet

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Mitali Bajaj, Managing Director, Café De Meet. Known for its Instagram-friendly ambience, fusion menu, and youth-centric energy, the café has become a popular choice for casual dining, social hangouts, and relaxed gatherings. The recognition celebrated its ability to create mood-led experiences, combining décor, menu appeal, and contemporary café culture. ■



Outstanding Contribution by Hotel Owner - Habib Sheliya

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Habib Sheliya, Managing Director, Hotel Epical, Valsad. A respected figure in the hospitality landscape of Valsad, Sheliya was recognised for his dedication, leadership, and consistent service standards. The award honoured his contribution to quality, guest satisfaction, and regional hospitality growth, acknowledging his role in setting a strong benchmark for hotel ownership and operations. ■



Best Fine Dining Restaurant in Surat - 370 Kitchen

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Sumit Kumar, this award was received by Janak Patel, Managing Director, 370 Kitchen. Known as an independent neighbourhood restaurant with contemporary interiors, 370 Kitchen offers a relaxed setting for dining, coffee, and social conversations. The award recognised its contribution to Surat's evolving fine-dining scene and its ability to create a modern, easygoing, and memorable restaurant experience. ■



Old Is Gold Restaurant in Surat - Crazy Bite

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi, this award was received by Bhautik Patel and Kalpesh Patel, Managing Directors, Crazy Bite. Established in 1990, Crazy Bite in Piplod has remained a popular vegetarian multi-cuisine restaurant and event venue. Known for North Indian, Continental, fast food, garden seating, banquets, wood-fired pizzas, and coffee, the award celebrated its legacy, recall, and continuing popularity across generations in Surat. ■



Best Village Theme Restaurant in Surat - Hare Krishna Village

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Ashok Kathirya and Partners, Hare Krishna Village. The restaurant offers a rustic dining setup inspired by traditional Indian culture, simplicity, and authenticity. The award recognised its immersive village-themed concept, cultural dining experience, and ability to blend tradition, food, and atmosphere for guests seeking regional character with authenticity. ■



Best Nonveg Restaurant at NH-48 - Cha Cha Amliwala, Ankleshwar

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Imtiyaz Vora and Imran Vora, MDs, Cha Cha Amliwala, Ankleshwar. Located prominently on NH-48 near the Ankleshwar toll area, the restaurant is known for bold flavours, non-vegetarian delicacies, and strong highway visibility. The award recognised its popularity among travellers, business visitors, local diners, and food lovers seeking a reliable highway dining stop across the region. ■



Most Family & Kids Favourite Chain - Radha Krishna

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, President, SGCCI, this award was received by Radha Krishna Shetty, Managing Director, Radha Krishna. The vegetarian dining chain is known for South Indian cuisine, affordability, consistent taste, and strong recall among local families. The award celebrated its position as a trusted household name offering comfort dining across generations in Surat through unwavering commitment to quality and service. ■



Best Theme-Based Restaurant & Banquet in Surat - Dream Festiva

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Nazar Ali Salluwala, MD, Dream Festiva. Located at Gaurav Path, Palanpur, Surat, Dream Festiva Restaurant & Banquets is known for special occasion hosting and event-led dining. The award recognised its theme-based setting, banquet capability, and commitment to making celebrations successful through coordinated service, thoughtful planning, and a guest-focused approach to social events. ■



Best Architecture & Interior Design Restaurant - K'S Antarvan

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Pankaj Selia, Managing Director, K'S Antarvan. Located in Vesu, Surat, K'S Antarvan is a vegetarian fine-dining restaurant known for its serene, nature-inspired ambience and diverse cuisine, including Asian, Chinese, and sushi offerings. The award recognised its architectural identity, interior design excellence, and slow-dining experience, placing it among Surat's distinctive restaurant destinations. ■



Innovation in Dining Award - Awamii by Commoner's Kitchen

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Dishant Modi, Managing Director, Awamii by Commoner's Kitchen. A premium café concept derived from The Commoner's Kitchen, Awamii is known for Mediterranean-inspired ambience, warm lighting, wooden textures, aesthetic interiors, and a curated menu. The recognition celebrated its trendsetting approach, elevated café culture, and contribution to contemporary dining experiences in Surat. ■



Most Family & Kids Favourite Chain - Geetha Restaurant

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by RV Shetty, MD, Geetha Restaurant. Widely known for authentic South Indian dishes, especially breakfast favourites, the restaurant has built its reputation on consistency, quality, and everyday comfort dining. The recognition celebrated its enduring appeal among families, children, and regular diners seeking familiar flavours and reliable service consistently. ■



Homemaker Turned Restaurant Chain - Kirti Patel, P'S Delicacies

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Kirti Patel, Managing Director, P'S Delicacies, Bardoli. From homemaker to entrepreneur, Patel has built a culinary brand rooted in taste, dedication, and quality. The recognition celebrated her inspiring journey, perseverance, and ability to transform passion into a successful restaurant chain, making her story an example of women-led entrepreneurship in food service. ■



Best Tribal Food Restaurant - Dangli, Vansda

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Bhupendra Bhai and Partners, Dangli, Vansda. Rooted in the tribal heritage of the Dang region, the restaurant offers rustic flavours, traditional recipes, and a nature-inspired ambience. The award recognised its authentic regional food experience, its celebration of local culture, and its role in presenting simplicity, tradition, and soulful dining to wider audiences for future generations alike. ■



Best Restaurant Chef in Surat - Krushangi Rawal, K'S Charcoal

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Krushangi Rawal, Chef, K'S Charcoal. Recognised as a rising culinary talent, Chef Rawal is known for creativity, finesse, and a distinctive approach to modern cuisine. At K'S Charcoal, the chef brings together flavour, presentation, and innovation to create memorable guest experiences. The award acknowledged passion, skill, and contribution to Surat's culinary scene.■



Most Popular Restaurant of Bharuch - Ashish Restaurant

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Hasan Ali and Mansur Ali, MDs, Ashish Restaurant. Known for consistent quality, warm hospitality, North Indian and vegetarian offerings, and value-driven dining, Ashish Restaurant has earned a strong reputation among local food lovers. The recognition celebrated its place as a trusted favourite for families and everyday dining experiences over the years.■



Most Restaurant Property Entrepreneur - Salman Ali Batti & Partners

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Salman Ali Batti and Partners, Royal Dine. The team was recognised for entrepreneurial vision, dedication, and commitment to quality. Their work reflects the growing energy of South Gujarat's restaurant sector, where focused ownership, service orientation, and consistent delivery continue to shape dining and hospitality experiences, while setting new benchmarks in customer satisfaction.■



Most Restaurant Property Entrepreneur - Shabbir Ali & Aejaz Ahmad Gayakwad

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Shabbir Ali Gayakwad and Aejaz Ahmad Gayakwad, representing Food Plaza, Bhagyoday, and Goodstay. Recognised for partnership, hard work, and commitment to quality experiences, the award honoured their contribution to South Gujarat's restaurant property ecosystem. Their efforts reflect the importance of dependable service, sustained ownership, and entrepreneurial collaboration in regional hospitality development.■



Most Restaurant Property Entrepreneur - Jagdish Gaur, Girnar

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was presented to Jagdish Gaur, Managing Director, Girnar, in recognition of Most Restaurant Property Entrepreneur in South Gujarat. Associated with consistency, quality, and dependable hospitality experiences, Gaur has built a trusted name through focused service and business commitment. The recognition acknowledged his role in strengthening the restaurant property landscape and contributing to regional dining confidence.■



Most Restaurant Property Entrepreneur - Jagdishbhai, Giriraj Kathiyawadi

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Jagdishbhai, Managing Director, Giriraj Kathiyawadi. Known for celebrating authentic flavours and cultural richness, Giriraj Kathiyawadi reflects a commitment to preserving traditional cuisine with passion and consistency. The recognition honoured Jagdishbhai's entrepreneurial role in bringing regional food experiences to diners and strengthening South Gujarat's restaurant identity.■



Most Restaurant Property Entrepreneur - Rajni Anjirwala And Bharat Anjirwala

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Rajni Anjirwala, Managing Director, and Bharat Anjirwala, Managing Director, Jalaram Kathiyawadi. Known for tradition, taste, and warm hospitality, the Anjirwalas have continued to delight guests with authentic regional flavours. The award recognised their contribution to South Gujarat's restaurant property space and their role in sustaining culturally rooted, guest-focused experiences.■



Most Restaurant Property Entrepreneur - Mehdi Hasan Sunsara And Nazar Mohd

Presented by Nikhil Madrasi and Narendra Somani, this award was received by Mehdi Hasan Sunsara, MD, and Nazar Mohammad, MD, APEX and De Glance. Recognised for quality, service, and consistent efforts, they have earned appreciation within the regional industry. The award honoured their entrepreneurial contribution to South Gujarat's restaurant property segment and their commitment to building dependable hospitality experiences for guests.■

Clean-label innovation powering HoReCa

Inicio supports modern HoReCa kitchens with clean-label ingredients, global flavours, and export-grade solutions designed for consistency, efficiency, and menu innovation at scale.



Inicio Impex Pvt Ltd operates as a food innovation and global export company serving the HoReCa sector with clean-label culinary solutions designed for today's commercial kitchens. With a portfolio spanning Natural Monk Fruit sweeteners, processed tomato products, international sauces, frozen vegetables and snacks, fruit pulps, Black Rice, and speciality ingredients, the company supports chefs, mixologists, and food service operators with products that balance speed, consistency, and quality.

Its Monk Fruit Sweeteners lead the clean-label offering. Available in bulk packs and retail solutions, they work as a 1:1 sugar replacement for HoReCa applications, including desserts, bakery preparations, ice

creams, milkshakes, tea, coffee, craft beverages, and high-heat cooking. The focus is on stable taste, reliable performance, and a cleaner alternative for evolving consumer preferences.

For kitchens looking to optimise preparation time, Inicio Impex offers high-yield tomato purées, pastes, whole peeled tomatoes, and crushed tomatoes, suited for gravies, sauces, and culinary bases. Its ready-to-eat international sauces, including Teriyaki, Chimichurri, Pesto, and Veg Oyster, help commercial kitchens introduce global flavours with minimal preparation time.

The company's frozen vegetables and snacks range supports quick-service operations, while its 100 per cent natural fruit pulps serve beverage, confectionery, and dessert menus throughout the year.

From Monk Fruit sweeteners to natural fruit pulps, Inicio helps kitchens deliver cleaner, faster, and more consistent menus

With sustainable sourcing, transparent nutritional profiles, and international quality standards, Inicio Impex positions itself as a partner for hospitality kitchens seeking efficiency, consistency, and next-generation food innovation.◆◆



Fern expands in Gujarat with a new hotel deal

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has announced the signing of Opal The Fern Ahmedabad, Karai — a Series by Marriott property — in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, strengthening its presence in one of its key growth markets. With this addition, the group's operational and upcoming portfolio in Gujarat will reach 42 properties. Scheduled to open in 2029, the hotel will feature 117 rooms and suites designed for business and leisure travellers. Facilities will include an all-day dining restaurant, a café, a conference room, a banquet hall, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a spa, and a salon.

Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, said Gujarat's strong economy, business ecosystem, and travel demand continue to support the group's expansion strategy. **Nirav Balubhai Rudani**, Director, Sankalp Landmark Ventures Pvt Ltd, said the partnership would create a distinguished destination for travellers visiting Ahmedabad and support evolving corporate, social, wellness, and dining needs across the wider Ahmedabad market. ■

Lemon Tree signs two Maharashtra properties

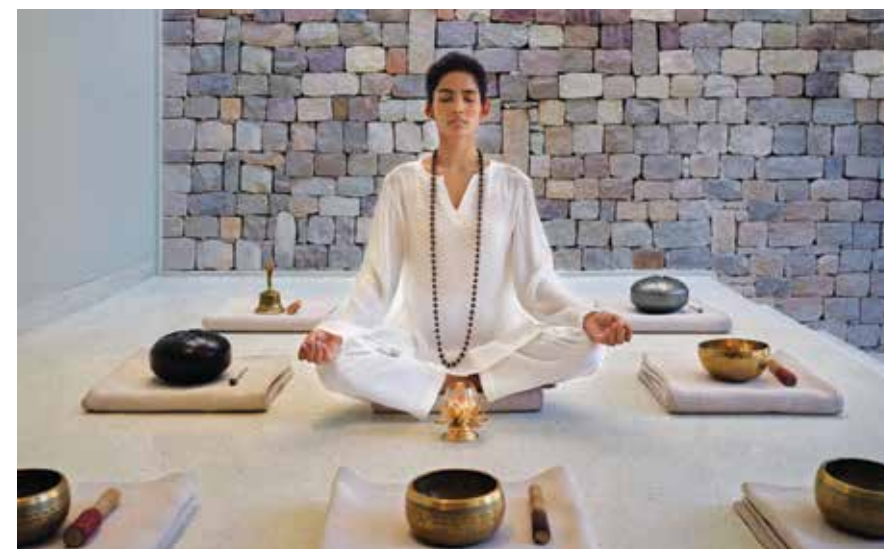
Lemon Tree Hotels Limited has announced the signing of two new resort properties in Maharashtra — Lemon Tree Resort, Tadgaon, and Lemon Tree Resort, Igatpuri — strengthening its presence in the drive-to leisure market. With these additions, the company will have 32 properties in Maharashtra. Both resorts will be managed by Carnation Hotels, its wholly owned subsidiary. Lemon Tree Resort, Tadgaon will offer 110 rooms, while Lemon Tree Resort, Igatpuri will feature 90 rooms. Both properties will include a restaurant, banquet hall, meeting and conference facilities, swimming pool, spa, and fitness centre, catering to leisure guests, families, and corporate retreats. **Vishvapreet Singh Cheema**, President, Lemon Tree Hotels, said the signings align with demand for accessible, high-amenity destinations from urban travellers and corporate houses. The resorts will target guests from Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane, and Pune across key regional markets. ■



Kamat Hotels wins protection for Orchid Trademark

Kamat Hotels (India) Ltd, owner of The Orchid brand, has secured a favourable order from the Bombay High Court in a trademark matter involving the use of the name Da'Orchid Ecotel in Odisha. The order strengthens the company's rights over The Orchid name, which has been associated with sustainable hospitality and guest service for nearly three decades. The court acknowledged Kamat Hotels' longstanding rights in The Orchid trademark and granted ex-parte protection against the continued use of the impugned name.

Vishal Kamat, Executive Director, Kamat Hotels (India) Ltd, said the order underlined the importance of protecting trademarks and safeguarding the trust, goodwill, and legacy built by the brand across markets in India and beyond. ■



IHCL announces loyalty tie-up, wellness drive

sessions with dhoop rituals, live flute performances, and sound-healing using Indian instruments. Guests were also introduced to Satvik dining inspired by Jnana Yoga, while sunset ceremonies, diya lighting, chants, and introductory yogic practices formed part of the Bhakti Yoga experience.

Extending the programme beyond guests, IHCL associates participated in Karma Yoga initiatives such as neighbourhood clean-ups, plogging walks, and tree plantation drives, reinforcing wellbeing as both a personal and community-led practice. Together, the initiatives reflect IHCL's effort to connect loyalty, travel, culture, and wellness across the guest journey more meaningfully. ■

IHCL has announced two guest-facing initiatives that extend its focus beyond hotel stays to more integrated travel and wellbeing experiences. The company has entered into a partnership with Oneworld to enhance benefits for members of its Taj InnerCircle-NeuPass loyalty programme, bringing hospitality and aviation rewards closer together for frequent travellers. Through the collaboration, Taj members will gain access to benefits

on participating Oneworld airlines, including limited-period savings with Cathay Pacific until 30 September, with more opportunities expected to follow. Oneworld loyalty members will receive savings on stays, dining, and spa experiences across IHCL's global portfolio.

In a separate initiative, IHCL's J Wellness Circle marked International Yoga Day with curated programmes across participating hotels. The experiences included Dhyana Yoga

Goa eateries adapt amid LPG shortage

Goa's restaurants and eateries are adopting alternative cooking methods as a prolonged shortage of commercial LPG cylinders disrupts kitchen operations. They are now increasingly relying on induction cooktops, wood-fired stoves, and traditional cooking techniques to continue serving customers.

The shortage has affected food preparation, with some restaurants modifying menus, reducing dishes that require longer cooking times, and adjusting operations to manage fuel availability. The shift has increased cooking time and operational costs



while making it difficult to maintain consistency in food quality.

Industry stakeholders have expressed concern over the prolonged disruption, warning that smaller eateries are particularly vulnerable as they depend heavily on

commercial LPG for daily operations. They have urged authorities to restore normal supplies at the earliest to prevent further impact on businesses and the state's hospitality sector, which is preparing for the tourism season. ■

Hotel investments get a new guest list

Fresh hotel investments from non-hospitality players are reshaping India's growth story, with Western India emerging as a key stage for capital, partnerships, and destination-led development.



Lucknow, Jaipur, and Guwahati. The message is clear: the airport is no longer just a place to catch a flight. It is becoming a district, with hotels, offices, retail, dining, entertainment, and convention facilities built around movement.

Pranav Adani, Director, Adani Enterprises Limited, described the group's vision as creating destinations that seamlessly integrate travel, stay, and urban experiences. **Sudeep Jain**, Managing Director, South West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts, said the opportunity lies across gateway cities and airport-led developments driven by business, leisure, and transit travellers. Where Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, and Ahmedabad intersect finance, aviation, trade, and tourism, the model has obvious relevance.

Developers move in

Another active strand is the real estate-to-hospitality route. Omaxe has announced a dedicated hospitality vertical with a planned investment of around ₹6,200 crore over four to five years, covering 19 hotels across 13 cities in five states. Its



Fresh capital from new investors is reshaping hotel growth through partnerships and discipline



India's hotel investment story has developed a new cast of characters. The sector is still shaped by hotel companies, owner-operators, and family-run hospitality groups, but a noticeable share of the next wave is coming from outside the traditional hotel business. Real estate developers, airport operators, FMCG groups, education-led businesses, family offices, and institutional investors are looking at hotels. The reason is not difficult to read. Travel demand has deepened, domestic tourism has become resilient, weddings and MICE are filling calendars, and branded supply remains tight in several markets. For investors who already understand land, infrastructure, consumer behaviour, or large capital projects, hotels now look less like a side bet and more like a growth vertical supported by evolving consumer preferences.

Western India leads

Western India is central to this shift. Mumbai and Navi Mumbai are being treated not only as aviation gateways but as future airport-city markets. Ahmedabad is moving in the same direction, while Goa, Lonavala, Nashik, Vadodara, and Ujjain are part of the broader story of leisure, business, pilgrimage, and weekend-led demand. For the HRAWI, this is not a distant trend; it is playing out across corridors where hospitality, real estate, transport, food and beverage, retail, and events overlap.

Airports as districts

The most visible western example is Adani Airport Holdings' airport-led development model. Its agreement with IHG Hotels & Resorts covers five hotels with close to 1,500 keys across Jaipur, Mangaluru, Thiruvananthapuram, and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Adani Airports has also announced airport-city developments across Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Ahmedabad,

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western link includes Ujjain, a major pilgrimage and cultural destination in Madhya Pradesh. **Mohit Goel**, Managing Director, Omaxe Ltd, summed up the logic neatly: "Hospitality is a natural extension of our integrated development strategy." That line explains much of what is happening. Developers are entering hotels because hotels can complete townships, commercial hubs, transit projects, and destination-led developments.

Beyond basic rooms

MBD Group offers another example. Known originally for publishing and education, it has partnered with Radisson Hotel Group to launch 50 co-branded hotels over the next decade, largely through an asset-light model. The planned footprint includes Udaipur, a western leisure market with strong destination pull. **Monica Malhotra Kandhari**, Managing Director, MBD Group, says, "The partnership aims to redefine luxury and lifestyle hospitality in India." The detail matters because non-hospitality investors are targeting lifestyle, premium, and design-led segments where travellers want a story, not just a bed.

Data backs the mood

The investment data backs the mood. Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) reported that India's hotel investments reached US\$ 567 million in 2025, a 67 per cent increase over 2024, with tier-II and tier-III cities capturing 40 per cent of transaction volume. The same report named Goa, Nashik, Vadodara, and Lonavala among transaction markets, placing Western India in the frame.



Real estate, airport, and institutional investors now see hotels as growth verticals, not side bets

JLL also recorded 51,647 branded keys signed across 424 hotels in 2025, with 71 per cent concentrated in tier-II and tier-III cities. HVS Anarock, meanwhile, estimated domestic tourist visits at about 4,548 million in 2025 and projected that the number could cross 9,500 million by 2030 if historical trends continue.

Beyond the metros

For hotels, the opportunity is wider than the metros. Goa continues to attract premium and lifestyle capital, but the next story also

belongs to Nashik's wine and wedding market, Lonavala's weekend demand, Vadodara's business base, Ahmedabad's convention and corporate travel, and the Mumbai-Navi Mumbai corridor. These markets need differentiated products: not every destination requires a luxury hotel, and not every airport-led project needs the same room mix.

Execution matters

There is, however, a caution. Hotels are not passive real estate. They are live, labour-intensive businesses where reputation is made every day at the front desk, in the kitchen, and in the guestroom. Fresh capital can build rooms, but only operating discipline can keep them relevant. For non-hospitality investors, the safest route will be strong partnerships with experienced hotel brands, serious feasibility studies, patient capital, and trained manpower.

The new money entering hotels should be welcomed. It can bring scale, faster development, better infrastructure, and stronger destination ecosystems to Western India. It can also create employment, support local vendors, and lift the quality of travel experiences across markets. But the real test will not be the size of the announcement. It will be whether these projects are built responsibly, operated professionally, and rooted in the places they serve.

If that happens, Western India could become a compelling stage for India's next hospitality investment cycle — where the hotel is not an isolated building, but part of a larger story of mobility, commerce, culture, and domestic travel. ♦♦



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