

HRAWI's Aurangabad chapter engages top political leaders to address hospitality industry concerns

Maharashtra's leaders from across political parties recently met with the Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India) – HRAWI's regional chapter in Aurangabad to discuss grievances within the hospitality industry.

Representing HRAWI, Harpreet Singh Nirh, President of Aurangabad Hotels & Restaurants Association, engaged in discussions and proposed recommendations for improvement with the BJP-Sena Mahayuti candidate, along with CM - Eknath Shinde, State Minister - Atul Save, Union Minister - B Karad, among other MLAs. Subsequently, another meeting was held with the Shiv Sena-INDIA candidate, joined by the Leader of the Opposition party, Ambadas Danve. Nirh is also expected to meet with Satish Chavan of the NCP and Prithviraj Chavan of the Congress to present the current status of the industry and outline expectations for its progress.

“The immediate and most pressing concern for the hospitality industry is the non-implementation of Industry Status. Despite being accorded the status of an industry, effective April 2021, the resolution merely remains on paper and the benefits are not being applied to the industry. The hospitality sector continues to pay electricity, water tax and other utility bills at commercial rates. Also, there are delays in issuing approval and eligibility certificates under the Tourism Policy 2016. Hotels are facing financial burdens due to higher utility charges and lack of subsidies, including interest subvention and capital subsidies, which are crucial for their sustainability. Hospitality is a big contributor to the tourism GDP, is the biggest employer and also is one of the biggest generators of Forex to the State. It is known to have a multiplier effect on the country's economy and can create employment opportunities direct as well as indirect,” says Pradeep Shetty, president, HRAWI.

The Association strongly emphasises that hospitality, as a major stakeholder in tourism, faces challenges such as high capital expenditures, vulnerability to an elitist tag, expensive funding, lack of ease of business and minimal support from relevant authorities.

“Aurangabad, as a tourist destination, has been suffering due to poor connectivity. Additionally, to operate a business in hospitality is strewn with hurdles and challenges that impact business continuity. Also, there is a pressing need for skill development initiatives to enhance employment opportunities within the hospitality sector, particularly in hotels and restaurants. These issues require urgent attention and resolution to support the industry's growth and viability. The absence of well-maintained hotels is as detrimental as the absence of infrastructure to attract tourists and business traffic to the region. Industries also rely on well-kept and efficiently managed hotel and restaurant properties to attract major investments,” adds Harpreet Singh Nirh, President, Aurangabad Hotels & Restaurants Association.

“HRAWI has always worked inclusively with Governments to enhance the tourism landscape in the State. Our collective goal is to position Maharashtra as a leading tourism destination. With its abundant tourism potential, the State can evolve into one of the best destinations globally. Our engagements with the contesting candidates are aimed at putting Maharashtra on the global map of top tourism destinations,” concludes Shetty.