

HRAWI Knowledge Series – I Concludes In Pune, Equips Hospitality Leaders on Critical Regulatory Updates

The Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India) – HRAWI successfully concluded its Knowledge Series – I at the Ruby Theatre, Amanora The Fern Pune – Series by Marriott, bringing together hoteliers, restaurateurs and industry stakeholders for a comprehensive deep-dive into critical regulatory and policy frameworks shaping the future of hospitality including the New Labour Codes, Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules, GST Updates, and the Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024. The knowledge sessions were designed to help hospitality businesses understand compliance requirements, operational implications and growth opportunities emerging from these reforms.

The first session on the New Labour Codes was led by a team of experts from Ernst & Young - Mr Tarun Pandey, Partner; Mr Anshul Shukla, Director and Mr Siladitya Dasgupta, Director. The session delved into the consolidation of multiple central labour laws into four comprehensive codes, explaining the revised wage definitions, impact on employee cost structures, new compliance obligations and the expanded coverage of social security for gig and platform workers.

“The new Labour Codes represent a paradigm shift in India's employment framework. For the hospitality industry which is highly people intensive, understanding changes in wage computation, working hour regulations and statutory benefits is critical. While the full implementation timelines may vary across States, businesses must proactively realign HR policies, employment contracts and payroll structures. Our session focused on translating these complex provisions into actionable strategies for HR and operational teams,” says Mr Siladitya Dasgupta, Director, Ernst & Young.

The next technical session, conducted by Mr Abhijit Parab, Partner – Cybersecurity, Ernst & Young, provided a comprehensive overview of the DPDP Act and its implications for the hospitality sector. Key topics included

data fiduciary responsibilities, consent management, data retention norms, breach reporting protocols and the substantial penalties for non-compliance. The discussion also highlighted the hospitality sector's extensive personal data touch points; from guest bookings, KYC records and payment information to employee records, vendor contracts and digital marketing databases.

“The hospitality sector processes vast amounts of sensitive guest data at every touch point, from bookings and check-ins to loyalty programs and smart-room services. Compliance with the DPDP Act is not just a legal obligation; it is fundamental to preserving guest trust and brand reputation. The rules demand structured governance, technical safeguards and accountability at every level of operations. Our objective with the session was to demystify the rules and equip professionals with a clear roadmap for implementation,” says Mr Abhijit Parab, Partner – Cybersecurity, Ernst & Young.

The third session, conducted by Mr. Akshit Saraogi, Director – Global Trade & Customs, Indirect Tax at E&Y Mumbai provided a deep dive into the evolving GST framework impacting hotels and restaurants. Key areas covered included the revised GST rate structure effective September 2025, the new definition of ‘Specified premises’, the intricate opt-in or opt-out process for F&B services, ITC considerations for renovations and routine maintenance, taxability of vouchers and advances and common issues highlighted by tax authorities during audits. The session also addressed recent budget amendments and areas for industry advocacy.

“GST compliance in hospitality requires careful classification, correct rate application and meticulous documentation. The recent GST changes, particularly the recalibration of rates for accommodation and restaurant services, demand a strategic rethink of pricing, ITC optimisation and compliance processes. Hospitality businesses must now navigate complex choices between 5 per cent and 18 per cent tax regimes for F&B, with significant implications for margins. Proactive compliance not only reduces litigation risk but also strengthens financial discipline,” says Mr. Akshit Saraogi, Director – Global Trade & Customs, Indirect Tax at E&Y Mumbai.

The concluding session was presented by CA Julfesh Shah, Chairman, COSIA Vidarbha, who provided an incisive analysis of the Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024. He highlighted the policy's ambitious vision to attract Rs.1,00,000 Cr in private investment, create 18 lakh jobs, and double tourist inflows over the next decade. Key incentives covered included capital investment subsidies, SGST reimbursement, electricity duty exemptions, additional FSI and targeted support for niche segments like eco-tourism, rural tourism and MICE.

“The Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024 is investment driven, incentive backed and sustainability focused. It provides hospitality entrepreneurs with a clear growth framework while strengthening Ease of Doing Business and infrastructure support. It is a game changer for the State's hospitality ecosystem creating a conducive environment for investment and growth. It was encouraging to see industry professionals engage deeply on how to leverage these provisions for their projects,” says CA Julfesh Shah, Chairman, COSIA Vidarbha.

“In a rapidly evolving regulatory environment, knowledge is our strongest asset. The enthusiastic response to our Knowledge Series reflects the industry's eagerness to stay ahead of the curve. From data protection and labour reforms to State level tourism incentives to understanding GST, today's sessions provided our members with the clarity and confidence needed to navigate change effectively. HRAWI remains dedicated to empowering hospitality professionals with the tools and insights to build compliant, resilient and future-ready businesses,” concludes Mr Jimmy Shaw, President, HRAWI.