

HRAWMI



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Dear members,

As we step into the second half of 2025, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for your continued support and spirited participation in HRAWI's initiatives. This period has seen significant activity, both celebratory and challenging for the hospitality sector, and our collective strength remains our greatest asset.

The recently concluded 5th edition of the 'Empowering Hospitality' Conclave & Awards in Lonavala was a resounding success. The event brought together thought leaders, policymakers and professionals from across the Western region to discuss innovation, sustainability, food safety and policy implementation. We were honoured to have Mohamed Farouk, Deputy Director General/Regional Director (Western & Central Region), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, as Chief Guest and to host sessions that sparked meaningful dialogue, on Maharashtra's new Tourism Policy, sustainability, pest management and FSSAI compliance. The awards celebrated

remarkable contributions by our fraternity across various verticals.

Beside this, we are deeply concerned about the 60 per cent hike in excise duty, alongside a 15 per cent increase in annual licence fees and imposition of 10 per cent VAT on India-Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) at FL3 outlets, which threatens the viability of thousands of small and mid-sized bars and restaurants across Maharashtra. On 14 July 2025, over 11,500 FL3 establishments joined hands in a peaceful, state-wide bandh, expressing unified dissent. This silent protest saw the full support of major hospitality associations, underlining the urgency of this matter. HRAWI has submitted representations to the authorities, urging the Government to reconsider and rationalise these draconian levies. The livelihood of thousands and the survival of smaller establishments are at stake and we remain committed to advocating on your behalf until a fair resolution is reached.

Amidst these pressing concerns, we are also preparing to mark a

milestone in HRAWI's journey. I am delighted to invite you to the 20th HRAWI Regional Convention, scheduled from 8–9 October 2025 at The Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai. This year's Convention is particularly special as we commemorate HRAWI's 75th Platinum Jubilee – a milestone that reflects our legacy, unity and resilience as an industry. The Convention Organising Committee has crafted an engaging and meaningful programme under this celebratory theme, with a focus on reflection, renewal and the road ahead. As part of this vision, the tourism and hospitality sector has been rightly recognised as a key pillar in our journey towards 'Viksit Maharashtra 2047', aligned with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's national mission of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

I urge all members to save the date and join us for this prestigious event, which promises to be both a tribute to our legacy and a gateway to the future. Let us continue to stand united in purpose; championing industry interests and tackling challenges together.

Warm regards,

JIMMY SHAW, President, HRAWI



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Recognising the dedication and dynamism of the hospitality pioneers, HRAWI honoured industry trailblazers at its 'Empowering Hospitality' Conclave & Awards.



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Mumbai to host 20th HRAWI Convention

Discover what awaits you at the 20th HRAWI Regional Convention – an event dedicated to meaningful networking and business opportunities along with impactful sessions.

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As medical tourism soars in India, **Suman Billa** emphasises the need for the country to harness the potential of its healthcare sector to become a healing hub.

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Imperatives for future-ready hospitality

As a testament to the incredible dedication and dynamism that define the hospitality fraternity, HRAWI honoured industry trailblazers at the 'Empowering Hospitality' Conclave.



The Hotel and Restaurant Association Western India (HRAWI) recently hosted the 5th edition of its flagship 'Empowering Hospitality' Conclave & Awards at Della Resorts & Adventures, Lonavala. The event encouraged inclusive and insightful discussions among industry leaders, hotel owners, restaurateurs and professionals from across the western region representing the voices of policy, sustainability, food safety and operations.

The event commenced with an inaugural session graced by **Mohamed Farouk**, Deputy Director General/



CA JULFESH SHAH
Chairman, COSIA, Vidarbha;
Former Vice-Chairman,
WIRC of ICAI and Former
Chairman, ICAI-NAGPUR



DR S ANAND
Consultant
Penetron Biotech



DR V PASUPATHY
Food Safety Expert, FSSAI
& Founder, Parikshan



JITENDRA GAWADE
Key Account Manager
Envu

Regional Director (Western & Central Region), Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India. He said "The hospitality industry is not just a key driver of tourism; it is the first impression of India for many visitors. The industry's services reflect the warmth, culture and professionalism of our nation." Farouk highlighted the need to focus on inclusive growth, accessible tourism, technological innovation and sustainability and also gave insights into the industry's partnership with MoT through initiatives like NIDHI Plus, Hunar Se Rozgar Tak and Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India.

The event was followed by discussions on various pressing issues of the industry. On the policy front,

The hospitality industry is not just a key driver of tourism; it is the first impression of India for many visitors. This industry's services reflect the warmth and professionalism of the nation

CA Julfesh Shah, Chairman, COSIA, Vidarbha; Former Vice-Chairman, WIRC of ICAI and Former Chairman, ICAI-NAGPUR, unpacked the investment benefits under the new State Tourism Policy, which aims to unlock the sector's growth potential and develop tourism infrastructure through structured and capital investment. Since being operational, this policy has emphasised timely provisional registration and classification of projects into mega, large and MSME categories. However, several guideline revisions, particularly for standalone restaurants, are in progress, which are expected to further widen the scope of incentives for stakeholders.

Taking the session forward, **Dr S Anand**, Consultant, Penetron Biotech, highlighted the necessity to adopt sustainability for the hospitality industry. Anand explained how their products are efficient enough in accelerating organic waste decomposition, reducing foul odours and cutting operational costs





and how they significantly improve the performance of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs), while reducing environmental load. “The future of hospitality lies in embracing innovations that are both efficient and environmentally sound,” said Anand.

Underlining food safety and regulatory compliance, **Dr V Pasupathy**, Food Safety Expert, FSSAI and Founder, Parikshan, stressed the need for organisation-wide training. He said, “Food safety is not just a compliance mandate; it is a culture that needs to permeate across all departments within a hospitality establishment.”

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India’s (FSSAI) training programmes have already shown promising results, with improved compliance scores across the board but to achieve true 360-degree safety, he suggested, shift towards the decentralised participation approach, which moves beyond kitchens to housekeeping, service and management.

FSSAI compliance lies in awareness, accountability and actionable implementation in the food sector. Their training collaboration with associations like HRAWI aims to create a multi-skilled workforce that

The future of hospitality lies in embracing innovations that are both efficient and environmentally sound

can proactively safeguard public health while boosting operational credibility. **Jitendra Gawade**, Key Account Manager, Envu, headed a session on pest control, which highlighted the role of pest management in guest safety and brand integrity. It also underlined the common oversights and compliance gaps in pest management that the owners need to work on.

The event concluded with an awards ceremony honouring hospitality professionals and organisations with exemplary contributions to customer service and operational excellence.

Lifetime Achievement Award: The Late Mr Subhash Thakker



MOHAMED FAROUK, Deputy DG/Regional Director (Western & Central Region), MoT, Gol, presenting the award to **SADHANA S THAKKER**, wife of Late Mr Subhash Thakker of The Dukes Retreat, accompanied by son **MILIND THAKKER**

The Late Mr Subhash Thakker was a visionary entrepreneur and pioneering hotelier whose legacy spans exports, textiles, food processing, manufacturing and most notably, hospitality. A self-made man, he was among the first to recognise Khandala’s potential as a premium destination for leisure and MICE tourism. The iconic Dukes Retreat, built under his personal vision, remains a testament to his foresight, warmth and commitment to excellence. His contributions not only shaped regional hospitality but also exemplified the values of innovation and Indian enterprise.

Founder’s Excellence in Regional Cuisine Winner Maganlal and Sons



JIMMY SHAW presenting the award to **ASHUTOSH AGARWAL**, Partner, Maganlal and Sons

Founded in the 1880s by Maganlal during the construction of the Pune–Kalyan railway line, Maganlal and Sons introduced the now-iconic chikki from a humble wooden cart outside Lonavala station. Maganlal’s Chikki started as an energy-rich treat for railway workers and later grew into a beloved legacy. Today, after four generations, the brand remains a symbol of tradition, authenticity and timeless taste synonymous with Lonavala. They are also the leading manufacturers, exporters and suppliers of chikki, dry fruit rolls, fudges, jellies and savouries.

Innovation in Dining Winner Della Group



GURBAXISH SINGH KOHLI presenting the award to **SINAIYA PRESSWALLA**, Director, Della Group, receiving on behalf of **JIMMY MISTRY**, Chairman & Managing Director, Della Group

Jimmy Mistry is celebrated for his game-changing contributions to experiential dining in Lonavala. Sky Garden at Della Resorts is a one-of-a-kind culinary marvel designed by him, where biophilic design and fine dining converge — 150 feet above the ground. Guests are treated to an extraordinary meal at a 24-seater levitating table, overlooking the 50-acre expanse of Della Resorts, aglow with LEDs, offering a sensory journey through light and luxury in India.

Founder’s Excellence in Regional Cuisine Winner Cooper’s Fudge and Chikkis



KAMLESH BAROT and **SHERRY BHATIA** presenting the award to **MAYUR RAJGURU**, receiving on behalf of **RASHNA IRANI**, Owner, Cooper’s Fudge & Chikkis

Cooper’s Fudge & Chikkis is a family-run establishment in Lonavala with a legacy dating back to the early 1950s. Founded by Noshir Cooper, it has gained iconic status for its signature chocolate walnut fudge. The business is currently managed by Rashna Irani, the third-generation owner. In recent years, Marzia and Kaizaan, representing the next generation, have joined the business bringing fresh energy and expanding its offerings. The brand specialises in fudges of all kinds, including chocolate, coconut, kesar kaju and mango.

Best Adventure Resort Winner Della Group



PRADEEP SHETTY and **GURBIR SINGH BEDI** presenting the award to **PEARL SANGA**, Director, Della Group, receiving on behalf of **JIMMY MISTRY**, Chairman & Managing Director, Della Group

Jimmy Mistry is recognised for his work in establishing Della as the go-to destination for luxury blended with adventure. Della Adventure Park in Lonavala is India’s largest extreme adventure park, offering over 70 activities for thrill-seekers. From the country’s only 100 feet swoop swing to the longest Flying Fox, along with dirt biking, paintball, zorbing, rappelling and more — just a short drive away from Mumbai and Pune, it is the ultimate destination for high-octane fun.

**Outstanding Contribution – Hotel
Winner Kailash Parbat Hotel Lonavala**



SAIRAJ DHOND presenting the award to **KISHORE KESWANI**, MD & Founder, Kailash Parbat Hotel Lonavala

Since inception, Kailash Parbat Hotel Lonavala has been a perfect getaway from the stresses of city life. One of the most preferred hotels, its full-fledged resort with 30 rooms, three multi-cuisine restaurants, banquets, conference hall, huge open green lawns, pool, water-park, water falls, gardens and games zone make it a perfect spot for all age groups as well as for corporate offsites, conferences, weddings, events and all types of celebrations. The property is in close proximity to tourist hives including Lonavala Lake and Kune Falls.

**Best Iconic Hotel – Lonavala
Winner Fariyas Resort Lonavala**



HARESH TANGAL presenting the award to **SHREENATH SHASTRY**, CEO, Fariyas Resort Lonavala

Nestled in the serene hills of Lonavala, Fariyas Resort Lonavala stands as an iconic symbol of luxury and leisure. Renowned for its world-class hospitality, the resort offers a perfect blend of comfort, elegance and recreation featuring 5-star accommodations, multiple dining options, a wellness spa and a unique water park experience. With its legacy of excellence, state-of-the-art facilities and enduring guest satisfaction, Fariyas continues to set the benchmark for premium hospitality in Maharashtra amid picturesque vistas.

**Sustainable Hospitality
Winner Triose Boutique Hotel**



KAMLESH BAROT and **SHERRY BHATIA** presenting the award to **MADHAV TODI**, Director, Triose Boutique Hotel

Triose Boutique Hotel demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability through impactful green initiatives, from rainwater harvesting and wastewater recycling to solid waste segregation and composting. With solar power generation, energy-efficient systems and the elimination of single-use plastics, they have significantly reduced their carbon footprint while promoting responsible hospitality. Triose Boutique Hotel offers guests a memorable getaway with a beautiful view of the Lonavala lake and the Maharashtra State Agricultural Research Institute.

**Best New Hotel – Khandala
Winner Ikshana Resorts & Spa**



CHETAN ARORA presenting the award to **MAHESH KHANDAGALE**, General Manager, Ikshana Resorts & Spa

Ikshana Resort & Spa, located amidst the hills of Khandala, started serving comfort with luxury in December 2024. With almost one year of service under their belt, they are working to offer their guests the most comfortable escape from city hustle with a blend of modern elegance and warm service. The resort offers a variety of amenities and guests can immerse themselves in nature's beauty while enjoying world-class comfort. More than a destination, it is a heartfelt experience of tranquillity, hospitality and refined living.

**Best Hotel – Lonavala
Winner The Fern – An Ecotel Hotel, Lonavala**



GURBAXISH SINGH KOHLI and **DILIP DATWANI** presenting the award to **ASHISH AMRISHCHANDRA AGARWAL**, Director, The Fern – An Ecotel Hotel, Lonavala

The Fern – An Ecotel Hotel, Lonavala is an 81-room hotel located in the picturesque hill station of Lonavala. Spread over two acres of serenity and brushing the back walls of Valvan Dam, the resort is just a minute's drive off the Mumbai–Pune Expressway. The Fern, Lonavala is well connected by road, in close proximity to key cities like Khandala, Karjat, Pune, Mumbai and Alibaug. The domestic and international airports of Mumbai and Pune are 95 km and 75 km away respectively, making it easily accessible to travellers.

**Best Boutique Resort - Lonavala
Winner Rhythm Hospitality**



DILIP KOTHARI and **NARENDRA SOMANI** presenting the award to **ASHISH JATIA**, Executive Director, Rhythm Hospitality

Rhythm Hospitality, a rising star in India's premium hospitality and vacation home sector, has a presence in handpicked destinations like Lonavala, Kumarakom and Gurgaon. The brand seamlessly blends modern comfort with natural charm and local character. Their innovative ResiTel model has redefined hospitality ownership, offering guests both exceptional stays and investment opportunities. With a commitment to warmth and thoughtful service, Rhythm Hospitality continues to create experiences that truly feel like home.

**Best New Hotel – Lonavala
Winner Enrise by Sayaji Lonavala**



TEJ TAKLE and **HARESH TANGAL** presenting the award to **SANJAY TOTLANI**, Director and Owner, Enrise by Sayaji Lonavala

Enrise by Sayaji redefines premium hospitality in the heart of Lonavala. It offers 32 exquisitely styled rooms with European interiors, curated recreational spaces and impeccable service across Suite, Executive and Deluxe categories. Apart from a grand 3,000 sq ft lawn for opulent weddings and events, they also offer an exclusive 40-pax banquet and pre-function area. With their signature multi-cuisine restaurant, Momentt, they ensure a delightful experience for their guests with gourmet dishes crafted from the finest ingredients.

**General Manager of the Year
Winner Faisal Nafees**



PARAMJIT SINGH GHAI presenting the award to **FAISAL NAFEES**, GM, Radisson Resort and Spa, Lonavala

Faisal Nafees, the iron spirit man who took the journey from bartender to General Manager, has spent 25 years redefining hospitality with passion, innovation and purpose. He is the true embodiment of dedication, creativity and hospitality excellence, working passionately to maintain exceptional growth, guest satisfaction and brand excellence at Radisson Resort and Spa, Lonavala. From launching iconic venues to shaping hospitality benchmarks, his visionary leadership stands tall in the industry and places him at a position of a true leader.

Young General Manager of the Year Winner Nitesh Yadav



CARL COSTA presenting the award to **NITESH YADAV**, General Manager, Revenues, Discover Resorts - Khandala

The expansion of Discover Resorts from a single property into a growing chain across Karjat, Khandala, and Pali, has served as a testament to what a young leader like Nitesh Yadav is capable of doing. With a background from the Taj Group and with impeccable leadership qualities, he has driven strong revenue growth and worked dedicatedly to elevate the guest experience at the resort. He has turned Discover Resorts into one of Maharashtra's top experiential hospitality brands with his customer-focused strategies and dedication towards the business.

Best New Restaurant – Lonavala Winner Ranggat Family Restaurant and Bar



JIMMY SHAW presenting the award to **SAKSHI VINOD GIDWANI**, daughter of **VINOD GIDWANI**, Owner, Ranggat Family Restaurant and Bar

Ranggat Family Restaurant and Bar, owned by Vinod Gidwani, is located near the Versoli Toll Plaza on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway. Known for their delicious menu, they offer a mix of indoor and outdoor seating at the restaurant. They serve North Indian, Mughlai and multi-cuisine dishes, all served in a setting that exudes warmth and comfort. Ranggat is renowned for its service, pet-friendly policy and scenic ambience making it a preferred stop for highway travellers.

Hotel Chef of the Year Winner Chef Nandan More



ANIL PATODIA presenting the award to **CHEF NANDAN MORE**, Cluster Chef, Dukes Retreat Khandala - Chalet Hotels

Chef Nandan More is a seasoned culinary professional with 30 years of global experience in hospitality, specialising in menu engineering, kitchen design and fine dining concept development. He has risen through the ranks with his exposure and tenure in several positions at different restaurants. His experience brings a distinctive and authentic taste to the dishes. He is passionate about weaving unique specialty restaurant experiences through strategic menu planning, kitchen layout optimisation and equipment audits.

Best Restaurant Thali – Lonavala Winner Hotel Chandralok



DR SUHAS AWCHAT and **AMIT KUMAR SHARMA** presenting the award to **ANISH GANATRA**, Director, Hotel Chandralok

Established in 1962, Hotel Chandralok has served generations with its iconic Gujarati Thali and heartfelt hospitality. Now in its fourth generation, the hotel continues to honour its legacy through delectable food and warm service. This hotel is a boost to modern hospitality culture and is a preferred choice for tourists as well as locals. Strongly committed to consistency, quality and tradition, the hotel staff welcome guests with bright smiles and try to fulfil every silent promise made to them with efficiency and precision. ♦♦



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Global Reach

Promoting food safety culture

HRAWI and FSSAI join hands to impart knowledge on food safety protocols and sustainable waste management strategies.

HRAWI Bureau

India is a land of culinary secrets. In this colourful country, food isn't just about sustenance. It is a way of expressing emotions. Besides the dedication of the chefs, what makes Indian cuisine distinctively unique is the proper and hygienic way in which it is made — and always with authentic ingredients.

HRAWI promotes this idea as the foundation of hospitality and continues to take proactive steps towards maintaining the standards of food safety in the Indian food industry. The association recently hosted Food

Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI's) latest Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) for hospitality professionals at the Hotel Le Grande, Mumbai International Airport.

The training session was conducted by **Dr V Pasupathy**, Trainer, Pariksan and **Manasi Parab**, Admin Assistant, Training and Seminar, HRAWI. It was attended by 67 hospitality professionals, providing them critical insights into food safety protocols, sanitation practices and sustainable waste management strategies to elevate operational standards across the sector. Through this initiative, HRAWI has now empowered 3,571

HRAWI has now empowered 3,571 professionals with its FoSTaC programme.

professionals with actionable knowledge and skills that would equip them in maintaining compliance with national safety regulations and global best practices.

HRAWI is planning to conduct many such training programmes in the upcoming months, which reaffirms its dedication to promoting a robust culture of food safety. ♦

HRAWI hails UNESCO tag for Maratha Military landscapes

Pradeep Shetty, extols the historic milestone, describing the recognition as a proud moment for the entire nation.



HRAWI Bureau

Pradeep Shetty, Spokesperson, HRAWI, has lauded the inclusion of the Maratha Military Landscapes in the UNESCO World Heritage list, calling it a big win and a proud moment for Maharashtra and the entire nation. The recognition affirmed the global

significance of the cultural and architectural legacy of India. Shetty said that it would act as a powerful catalyst for heritage tourism, drawing international and domestic travellers to these historic forts.

He added, "Under Maharashtra's progressive Tourism Policy 2024, which offers incentives, infrastructure support and

a renewed focus on cultural tourism, this development perfectly aligns with our goals."

Shetty further noted that it will help create employment, promote regional entrepreneurship and drive investments in hospitality infrastructure across heritage destinations along with boosting tourism in the state. ♦




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HRAWI's 20th Regional Convention returns to Mumbai

From engaging discussions to networking opportunities, the 20th HRAWI Regional Convention from 8–9 October 2025 in Mumbai will have it all.



HRAWI is all geared up to host the long-awaited 20th HRAWI Regional Convention from 8–9 October 2025, at the Taj Mahal Palace, Colaba, Mumbai.

The 2-day event themed '75 Years of Service, Solidarity and Success', promises to be a premier gathering for hospitality professionals, offering an exclusive platform to connect with fellow members, industry leaders, vendors and valued partners.

Jimmy Shaw, President, HRAWI, said, "This year's convention



JIMMY SHAW
President, HRAWI

is particularly special as we commemorate HRAWI's 75th Platinum Jubilee, a milestone that reflects our

legacy, unity and resilience as an industry. The Convention Organising Committee has crafted an engaging and meaningful programme under the celebratory theme, with a focus on reflection, renewal and the road ahead." Additionally, the convention will feature a series of insightful sessions, designed to address industry challenges and opportunities. Eminent speakers and domain experts will share their valuable perspectives and best practices. "The Convention is more than just a celebration; it is a platform to chart the course for the next phase of hospitality in India," remarked Shaw. ♦



20TH HRAWI REGIONAL CONVENTION

OCTOBER 8 AND 9, 2025

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The customers' shift to retail purchase will encourage alcohol consumption off-premises, leading to irresponsible drinking practices

cannot pass on the full cost increase to consumers without risking reduced footfall. This will cause increased financial strain on businesses already struggling with 10 per cent higher licence fees, 10 per cent VAT and rising operational costs. Additionally, the annual Excise license fees have also been hiked by 15 per cent, further compounding the burden on the industry.

- **Increased expenses, decrease in tourists' interests:** For tourists and domestic consumers alike, the increased cost of alcoholic



beverages would increase the overall holiday expenses, which could make them avoid such places, especially global travellers who consider pricing as key point when choosing a destination. This would make Maharashtra a less competitive destination for tourists.

- **Fuelling illicit and unregulated liquor trade:** To avoid high retail and service prices, some

consumers turn to unlicensed sources that sell cheap and poorly manufactured liquor, which not only impact the legally built businesses but also poses serious health and safety risks.

As HRAWI flags the consequences of the state government's decision, it also showcases the association's commitment to becoming the voice of the hospitality sector in the region. ♦♦

Hiked excise duty hits tourism

HRAWI writes to Maharashtra government over increased excise duty stating adverse impact of the move on the tourism & hospitality sector.

HRAWI Bureau

HRAWI recently raised concerns over the Maharashtra government's decision to increase the state excise duty on India-Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL).

As per the decision, there has been a 50 per cent increase on IMFL, which will lead to hiked retail prices by over 60 per cent. The government has also decided to increase the duty on country liquor and imported premium liquor,

which will hike their retail prices by 14 per cent and over 25 per cent, respectively. The excise duty on beer and wine has not been increased.

According to the government, this move is aimed at boosting state revenues but it has ignored the other side of the coin — the adverse impact of this policy on the state's hospitality industry.

Jimmy Shaw, President, HRAWI, highlighted several negative consequences of this in his letter addressed to **Ajit Pawar**, Deputy CM, and Minister of Finance & Excise, Government of Maharashtra:

- **Shift towards FL2 outlets:** Increase in excise duty will hike alcohol prices at FL3 outlets, which will force consumers to purchase cheap liquor from FL2 outlets. This will not only reduce the revenue for hotels but will also undermine the revenue flow in the industry. The customers' shift to retail (FL2) purchase will encourage alcohol consumption off-premises, leading to irresponsible drinking practices.
- **Additional pressure on the industry:** Hospitality businesses face reduced margins as they

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India to become Marriott's 3rd largest market globally

Rajeev Menon, President, Asia Pacific excluding China, Marriott International, said, "Given our recent signings and the brand's strong growth trajectory, India is set to become Marriott's third-largest market globally within the next 2-3 years. By the end of next year, we expect to have nearly 250 operational hotels in the country. We are also on track to increase our presence from 40-90 locations across India." Menon is excited to celebrate Marriott's 100th Anniversary in 2027.



GSTC

unveils Certified Hotels directory

Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) recently published the GSTC-Certified Hotels directory, a comprehensive resource designed to help destinations, businesses and consumers identify accommodations that have been certified as sustainable by GSTC-accredited Certification bodies. It reinforces the importance of traceability and transparency from an assurance perspective, providing credible validation of sustainability certifications. Notably, **CB Ramkumar**, Vice Chair, GSTC, revealed that despite India's growing hospitality industry, only six Indian hotels are presently GSTC certified, compared to over 2,000 globally. He added, "The disparity lies in the lack of strong policy support in India. While the MoT can issue guidelines, implementation depends on individual states." GSTC is urging Indian hoteliers to embrace certification not just as an ethical move but as a strategic business advantage.

Food services

sector to grow **10x in India**



According to 'How India Eats' — a recent study by Bain & Company and Swiggy — the food services market in India is currently valued at ₹550k crore. The market is poised to grow 10-12 per cent annually over the next seven years, reaching ₹900-1000k crore by 2030. This growth trajectory will be driven by an expanding customer base, growing consumption occasions and a rise in supply. Additionally, online food delivery is expected to grow faster at approximately 18 per cent CAGR, contributing 20 per cent to the overall food services market by 2030. The report aims to decode the underlying, complex demand characteristics of the food services market in India and trends that will shape this demand going forward.



hits the milestone of 10k rooms

Fern Hotels & Resorts recently announced the signing of four new properties across Lucknow, Navi Mumbai, Vadodara and Gwalior, crossing the 10,000-room inventory threshold. This marks a major milestone in its growth journey. With these signings, the group further cements its presence across key urban and emerging destinations and reinforces its commitment to sustainable hospitality and exceptional guest experiences. **Suhail Kannampilly**, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, said, "Crossing the milestone of 10,000 rooms in signed properties is a defining moment in our journey and a testament to the strength of The Fern Hotels & Resorts in a highly competitive market. It underscores our strategic focus on sustainable expansion across India, while staying true to our vision of eco-conscious hospitality and exceptional guest experiences."

MoT launches

Digital MICE Catalogue

listing **Indian** venues

The Ministry of Tourism's (MoT) has launched Digital MICE Catalogue, which aims to promote India as a preferred MICE destination. It features premier venues, services and facilities available across India for hosting MICE events. This endeavour by the Ministry will enhance India's visibility as a MICE destination and foster greater international engagement. Sharing details of the initiative, **Arun Srivastava**, Joint Director General, MoT, said, "MoT has launched India's first MICE digital catalogue carefully populating it with MICE facilities across 60 cities of India. This is very promising, as India recently witnessed a 51 per cent growth in hosting global conferences in 2024 over 2022. India's ICCA global rank improved to 28th in 2024 from 37th in 2022. Ministry is working on multiple fronts for developing a facilitating ecosystem for the MICE industry."

India leads APEC region with highest hotel projects

India has emerged as the top country for hotel development in the Asia-Pacific region, setting a new record with 693 projects and 88,884 rooms under development in Q1 2025, according to Lodging Econometrics. This marks a 19 per cent increase in projects and a 27 per cent rise in rooms year-on-year

(YoY), driven by strong domestic tourism and infrastructure investments. As seen in the Q1 2025, the total hotels pipelined in the Asia Pacific region, excluding China (APEC) stands at 2,074 projects, encompassing 408,213 rooms, marking a 3 per cent YOY increase in projects. ♦

India's \$3 tn tourism dream hinges on 'Heal in India'

Suman Billa, Addl. Secretary & DG, Ministry of Tourism, GoI, highlights that India must leverage its Ayurveda and modern healthcare to transform the country into global healing destination.

 **Surbhi Sharma**

In a world increasingly seeking holistic healing, India stands at a transformative crossroads, one where wellness meets economic ambition. Speaking at Heal in India 2025 Medical & Wellness Tourism Summit event, **Suman Billa**, Additional Secretary and Director General, Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India, articulated a powerful vision — India's tourism economy must reach US\$ 3 trillion by 2047, marking 100 years of independence. At the heart of this goal lies a clear strategy of making medical and wellness tourism the strategic pillars of India's global positioning.

India's strategic edge

As per Billa, India is uniquely poised at the intersection of clinical excellence and cultural wisdom. While countries may boast advanced medical facilities or ancient healing systems, India blends both. "Our USP is not just great doctors and hospitals but our ancient systems of



healing — Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha, which treat the body, mind and spirit," he noted. In his view, India must evolve from being a place 'where you are treated' to 'where you come to heal'. Medical tourism, currently valued at US\$ 7.6 billion and wellness tourism at US\$ 19.4 billion, are expected to double in five years, making them critical levers for tourism-led GDP growth, job creation and foreign exchange.

Trust is the cornerstone

For Billa, the challenge is not just scale, it is trust, therefore, India's credibility in this sector must rest on seamless experiences, exceptional services, international standards, safety and security.

Action plan

To make 'Heal in India' a global movement, Billa outlined a clear action roadmap and stressed



on the need to create a unified digital platform integrating hospitals, tour operators, hotels and wellness centers. "Identify 10 medical-wellness tourism clusters by 2027 to act as focused growth zones. Incentivise states and service providers for quality outcomes, campaigns and FOREX contributions. Run global campaigns targeting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Africa and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) for medical,



SUMAN BILLA
Addl. Secretary & DG,
Ministry of Tourism, GoI

"To project India as a healing soft power, we need to make 'Heal in India' campaign a global movement."

and the West for wellness tourism to position India as the world's preferred healing destination. Bridge gaps in standardisation and skilling, especially in tier II and III cities," he stated.

Soft power in the making

"To project India as a healing soft power, we need to make 'Heal in India' campaign a global movement where the country heals the world, not just with its science but also with its soul," Billa concluded. The stakeholders across tourism, healthcare and wellness, must realise that India's next leap in tourism is not just about numbers, it is about nurturing global trust. ♦



India leads pulse of Global Healing

A report by KPMG and FHRAI on soaring medical tourism in India projects its growth from US\$ 18.2 billion in 2025 to US\$ 58.2 billion by 2035.



India's ambition to become the world's most trusted healthcare destination is finding solid ground through the 'Heal in India' initiative, supported by a strong mix of medical expertise, traditional healing and government-backed reforms. This growth is further supported by the data released in a new report by KPMG and FHRAI, titled 'Heal in India: Catalysing Medical and Wellness Tourism for a Healthier Global Future'. It maps out how India can lead the global medical and wellness tourism market in the near future.

Triple growth

According to the report, India's medical tourism market is expected

India currently ranks
10th in the global medical
tourism Index and 7th in the
wellness tourism space

to grow from US\$ 18.2 billion in 2025 to US\$ 58.2 billion by 2035, registering a CAGR of 12.3 per cent. This growth is driven by factors such as affordability, high-quality clinical outcomes, and India's increasing global credibility in healthcare services. The country currently ranks 10th in the global Medical Tourism Index and 7th in the wellness tourism space. In 2024, India issued 463,725 medical visas, a steep rise

from 3.75 lakh in 2019. Patients from 78 countries travel to India, with Bangladesh alone accounting for over 323,000 of these visits.

Competitive India

India's cost advantage is one of its biggest draws. For example, a Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting (CABG) surgery, which can cost between US\$ 151,000–448,000 in the United States, is priced between just US\$ 2,098–4,200 in India. The country also has over 1,700 hospitals accredited by NABH and 63 by the Joint Commission International (JCI), underscoring its quality of care. English-speaking medical professionals and culturally sensitive care further enhance the patient experience.

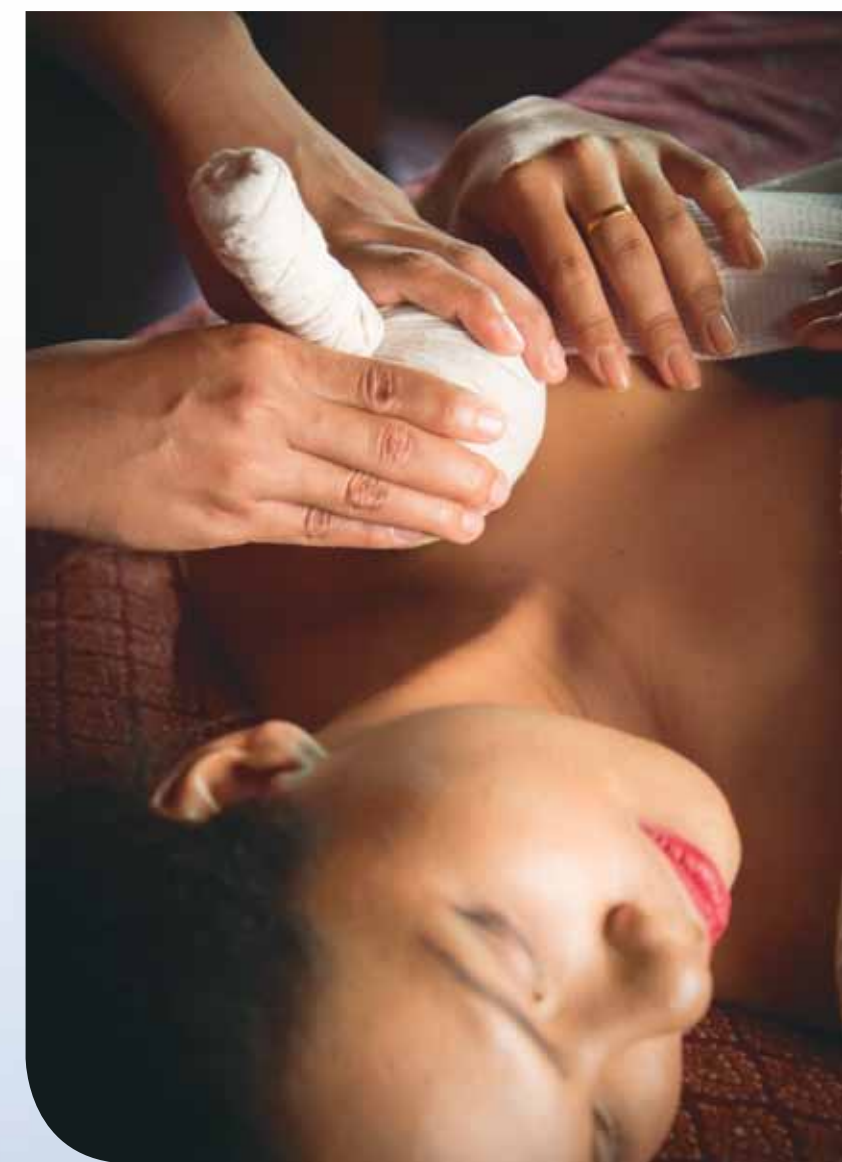
In 2024 alone, India issued 173 AYUSH visas, 221



Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) e-visas, and 17 AYUSH attendant visas. The AYUSH sector is growing at a CAGR of approximately 17 per cent, supported by 3,844 hospitals and 755,780 practitioners.

Digital Infrastructure

India's telemedicine platform e-Sanjeevani has conducted over 276 million consultations, showing significant digital readiness. A dedicated 'Heal in India' portal is also under development to provide end-to-end facilitation for international patients. Regionally, Kerala is emerging as the wellness capital, generating ₹30–40 crore per month from medical tourism, with projections of reaching ₹100 crore monthly. Delhi NCR is a hub for advanced tertiary care and organ transplants, performing 1,445 such procedures for foreign patients in 2023 alone. Maharashtra, with 3.39 million foreign tourist arrivals in 2023, is investing in integrated medical tourism hubs. ♦



A sustainable mark by Green Key India

Green Key India, a certification agency, is proactively making a mark in certifying a diverse range of hotels based on international standards for sustainable operations.



 HRAWI Bureau

As an eco-conscious approach becomes imperative for the hospitality sector, hotel brands are taking multiple eco-friendly initiatives to propagate sustainable operations. The question remains as to how travellers and guests are going to trust a brand's operations. Here come the certification agencies to the



DR JAGAT MANGARAJ
National Operator, Green Key India, Centre for Environment Education

rescue. These certifications act as a stamp of approval, demonstrating a commitment to industry standards and enhancing professional development. They become a source of credibility for the guests.

To propagate these efforts further, one of the key certification agencies, Green Key India is proactively involved in auditing the brands' initiatives. Over the past 18 months, Green Key India has audited 52 hotels and certified a diverse range of hotels based on internationally recognised environmental and sustainable operational parameters. What makes them authentic is the transparent nature of their programmes, regular on-site audits conducted by well-trained auditors and third-party

verification. **Dr Jagat Mangaraj**, National Operator, Green Key India, Centre for Environment Education, said "We are deeply encouraged by the sincere and serious efforts displayed by participating hotels to conserve natural resources and implement sound environmental policies."


So far, 51 hotels have successfully achieved, and 10 hotels have defended and renewed, their Green Key certification for the second year after undergoing a rigorous renewal audit.


This reflects a strong and growing commitment within India's hospitality sector to align with global sustainability standards, continuous improvement and responsible tourism practices. ♦




51 hotels have successfully achieved and 10 hotels have renewed their Green Key certification after rigorous audit by Green Key India

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Goa is set to welcome a monumental cultural tourism destination — Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Digital Museum — by 2026 at Farmagudi, Ponda. The project was announced by **Rohan A Khaunte**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Goa. The museum is being developed with a total project cost of ₹125.59 crore. “This project will become the most iconic cultural destination in Goa, promoting the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj while nurturing a cultural and spiritual ecosystem,” said Khaunte. The project aligns with Goa’s strategic shift toward Tourism 2.0 — a vision led by **Dr Pramod Sawant**, Chief Minister, Goa, emphasising regenerative tourism. In addition, redevelopment of the Rudreshwar Temple premises, introduction of Ghat Arti at Narve and revitalisation of Harvalem Falls are other initiatives underway.

Lemon Tree Hotels

signs property in Surat

Lemon Tree Hotels announced the signing of Lemon Tree Premier, Surat, Gujarat. Positioned in the Diamond and Silk City of India, Surat, this property will be managed by Carnation Hotels, a subsidiary of Lemon Tree Hotels. It will feature 108 rooms, a restaurant, a banquet, a meeting room, a swimming pool, a gym and a spa. The hotel is well connected via road and air, offering easy access to both public and private transport. Speaking on the signing, **Vilas Pawar**, CEO, Managed & Franchise Business, Lemon Tree Hotels commented, “This opening will be in addition to our nine existing and 17 upcoming hotels and resorts in the state. The rich culture and the state’s pro-business policies, infrastructure development and strategic location are a great draw for business and leisure travellers.”

MP forges ties with France for tourism boost

Madhya Pradesh witnessed 134 million tourist arrivals last year — an astounding 526 per cent increase from 2020. To build on to this, the state is taking significant steps towards the city’s tourism future. One such development is the signing of an MoU with the French Government and Alliance Française de Bhopal for deeper Indo-French ties in tourism. The MoU is a three-year agreement, with a provision for extension. Key initiatives under the MoU include: Annual Indo-French Cultural Calendar with curated events; French translations of MP’s promotional materials for enhanced outreach to European travellers; French language and culture training programmes for state tourism personnel and academic and cultural exchange programmes spotlighting MP’s artists and artisans on the global stage. Additionally, MP has also increased its focus on rural tourism by inaugurating 241 homestays. Homestays registered with the state tourism development corporation will soon be available for booking on the corporation’s official website.



Maharashtra to launch India’s 1st convention bureau to boost MICE

Maharashtra government’s Department of Tourism announced the formation of Maharashtra Convention Bureau (MCB), India’s first state-led initiative focused on cementing the state’s position as a compelling destination for global events. The Bureau was introduced at IMEX Frankfurt 2025. Based in Mumbai, MCB will build upon the state’s global reputation as a business and tourism hotspot. Its formation is a significant step in leveraging world-class infrastructure, a thriving economy and a robust service ecosystem to establish the state as a top destination for high-impact international events. MCB will work closely with international event organisers, offering administrative assistance and providing resources to ensure the success of events. Additionally, the Bureau will collaborate with key stakeholders, including hotels, venues and service providers to ease the planning process and enhance the overall experience.



Hilton Garden Inn

Mumbai International Airport now open



Hilton announced the opening of Hilton Garden Inn Mumbai International Airport, marking the debut of the brand in India’s financial capital. Located in Andheri East, the hotel is strategically positioned minutes away from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. Developed in partnership with Fariyas Hotels & Resorts, the 140-room hotel is set to welcome business and leisure travellers. The hotel features thoughtfully designed guest rooms and suites equipped with ergonomic workspaces and plush beds. Its interiors are adorned with curated artwork that reflects Mumbai’s vibrant cultural spirit. Guests can enjoy an array of amenities — all-day dining restaurant, rooftop pool, fitness centre and a 24x7 convenience store. With versatile meeting rooms and event spaces, the hotel is well-suited for business meetings, training sessions and intimate social gatherings. The hotel offers easy access to major corporate hubs, entertainment districts and city landmarks.

Regenta Central

Shivani, Solapur starts operations, targets MICE

Royal Orchid Hotels (ROHL), announced the launch of Regenta Central Shivani, Solapur, strengthening its footprint in Maharashtra. This marks ROHL’s fourth property launch in the state this year and its 13th hotel in Maharashtra. Located in the MIDC area of Solapur, along the scenic Bhima and Seena river basins, the hotel is ideally positioned to cater to both business and leisure travellers. The 65-key venture includes three accessible rooms and blends functionality with Rajasthani design theme. Modern amenities such as a swimming pool, spa and gym add to the appeal, making it an ideal choice for guests. The hotel also offers some of Solapur’s most expansive event and dining spaces. Additionally, the city’s religious significance as home to pilgrimage destinations such as Tuljapur, Pandharpur and Akkalkot positions the hotel as a convenient base for spiritual tourism. ♦

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Dr Anita Frantz emphasises that MA Rangoonwala Institute is committed towards blending classroom theory with real-world scenarios, empowering students to excel in the global hospitality landscape.



Driven by a mission to shape world-class talent in hospitality, MCE Society's MA Rangoonwala Institute of Hotel Management and Research, Pune, established in 2006, stands as a premier institution for hospitality education.

Committed to redefining academic excellence, the institute blends theoretical knowledge with practical exposure, shaping the next generation of hospitality professionals.

Accredited with an 'A' grade by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), it operates under the esteemed Maharashtra Cosmopolitan Education Society (MCE Society).



DR ANITA FRANTZ
Principal, MCE Society's
MA Rangoonwala Institute
of Hotel Management &
Research, Pune

Located in the heart of the sprawling 24-acre Azam Campus in Pune, the institute is known for its rich educational heritage and is home to multiple institutions offering diverse disciplines.

The faculty comprises experienced professionals and academicians who bring industry insights into the classroom

Global-standard curriculum

The institute is committed to providing a comprehensive curriculum that aligns with global hospitality standards. It offers a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Studies, a degree programme affiliated with Savitribai Phule Pune University. The eligibility for admission to this programme



requires successful completion of H.S.C (Arts, Science, Commerce or MCVC). To support students in their academic journey, the college also provides scholarship facilities ensuring financial assistance for deserving and meritorious students.

One of the key strengths of the college is its state-of-the-art infrastructure, which includes modern training kitchens, well-equipped restaurants, a front office lab and a housekeeping lab. The college also features an extensive library, ICT facilities and a commercial bakery contributing to an enriched learning environment for students.

The faculty comprises of experienced professionals and academicians who bring industry insights into the classroom. Their expertise ensures that students are well-versed in both theoretical concepts and practical applications.

Beyond academics, the students also actively engage in extracurricular activities, industry interactions and practical training. Events such as culinary showcases, guest lectures and industrial visits help students gain hands-on experience and exposure to real-world hospitality operations.

Competitive edge

The MA Rangoonwala Institute of Hotel Management and Research is an approved training partner of FoSTaC, FSSAI, New Delhi, and has been successfully conducting training programmes. These training sessions are organised for hotel

employees, students and food handlers in the food business across India. Through this initiative, the institute actively supports the 'Eat Right' movement, fostering a culture of safe, hygienic and mindful eating.

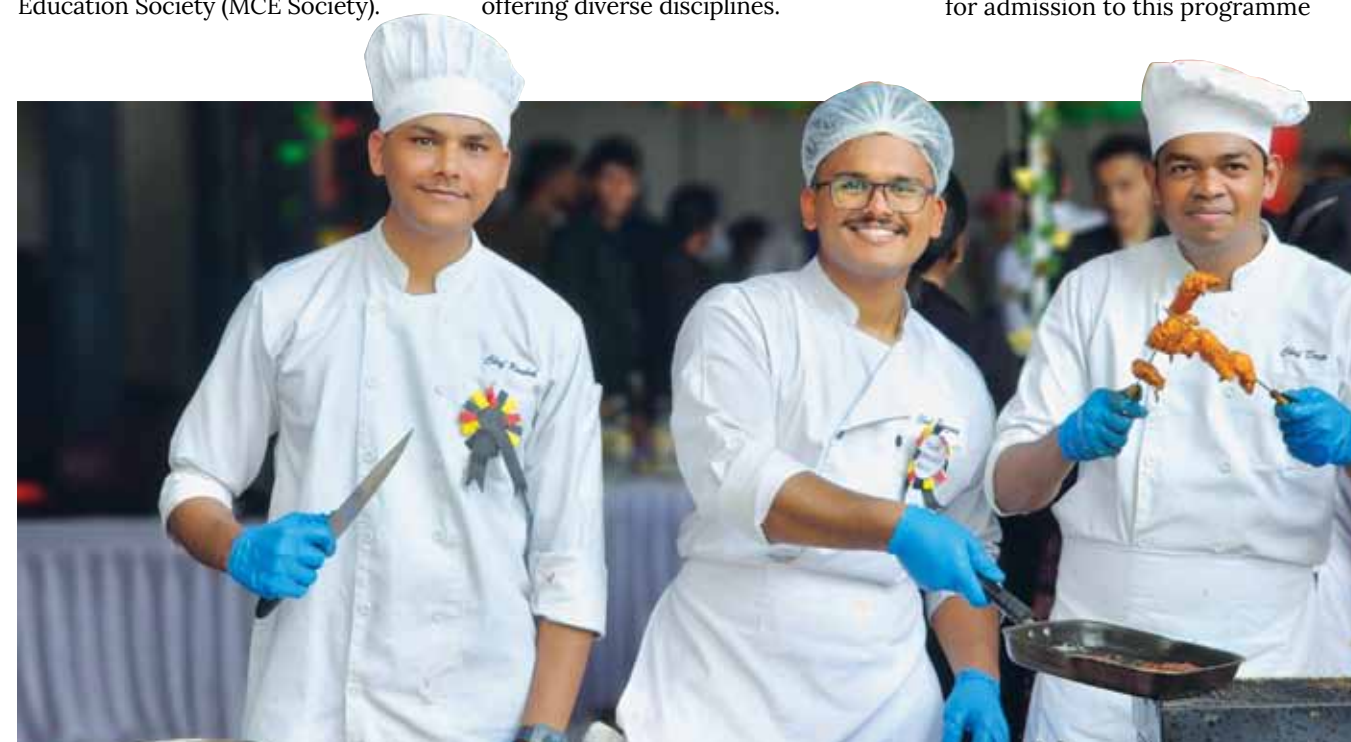
In addition, the college has conducted dining etiquette and personality development workshops for school and college students, successfully training over 6,000+ participants. These workshops aim to equip young minds with essential life skills, enhance their personality development and instil appropriate dining etiquette.

Success stories

The institute has a strong track record of placements, with

students securing opportunities in top hospitality brands, luxury hotels, airlines, cruise lines and renowned restaurants globally. The college collaborates with leading industry partners to provide hands-on training, internships and job placements. Esteemed recruiters such as Taj Group, Marriott, Hyatt, Oberoi and global cruise liners frequently hire graduates, ensuring excellent career prospects for students.

With a vision to create globally competent hospitality professionals, the MA Rangoonwala Institute of Hotel Management and Research continues to be a beacon of excellence in hospitality education. ♦♦



Hospitality 3.0 designs for multi-sensory world

Kalatmak, known for premium furniture, transforms design visions into immersive, meticulously crafted settings with seamless execution.



We are entering the era of Hospitality 3.0, where design is evolving into something more fluid and responsive. Guests are now looking for emotional cues, spatial empathy and a kind of quiet intuitiveness in how a space receives them. A room that adjusts to the light preferences of a frequent traveller, a courtyard that invites both solitude and social connection or a lobby that doubles as a co-working hub. These are not concepts of the future. They are becoming the new baseline.

Why is this important? Because nearly 50 per cent of the human brain is devoted to processing visual information. This evolution is not just about visual drama. It is

Kalatmak has worked with some bold, imaginative hospitality brands who do not see execution as the last mile but as a critical part of the creative process

about designing for all senses. Think curated art and lighting, ambient acoustics, textural contrasts like velvet against stone and signature scents that leave an imprint long after checkout. The integration of technology is subtle yet strategic: smart lighting, responsive climate control and AI-driven personalisation systems offer convenience wrapped in 'invisible luxury'.

This is where a brand like Kalatmak, a brand known for building premium customised furniture,

comes into play. This brand has worked with some bold, imaginative hospitality brands who do not see execution as the last mile but as a critical part of the creative process.

Translating a designer's philosophy into tangible, multi-sensory environments, from guest rooms to outdoor spaces, is where Kalatmak as a brand bring its expertise to the table. To build environments that feel effortless, even when every inch has been thought through. ♦



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