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(L-R) Jimmy Shaw, President, HRAWI, felicitating Jayasinh Vallabhdas Mariwala, Chairman, OmniActive Health Technologies

Empowering Hospitality
through innovation, excellence & growth



Dear members,

As we move through a dynamic and challenging phase for the hospitality industry, it is important to reflect on both the headwinds we are navigating and the initiatives that continue to strengthen our collective resilience.

Over the last couple of months, the sector has been grappling with the ongoing commercial LPG crisis, which has significantly disrupted operations across hotels and restaurants. With inconsistent supply of commercial LPG cylinders and rising costs, many establishments have been forced to curtail operations, rationalise menus and, in some cases, temporarily suspend services. The most recent hike in the price of commercial LPG of ₹993 coming immediately after hikes of ₹195.50 in April and ₹144 in March, has dealt a severe blow to the hospitality industry.

This has not only impacted business continuity, but has also placed pressure on employment and the broader supply chain. We remain in active dialogue with policymakers, advocating for urgent intervention to ensure uninterrupted LPG supply and mitigate the cascading impact on the industry. Amid these challenges, our commitment to knowledge sharing and industry preparedness remains steadfast. The second edition

of our Knowledge Series, held recently in Mumbai, brought together experts and industry stakeholders to discuss critical regulatory developments, including the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP) Rules, GST updates, Labour Codes, and Tourism Policy.

These sessions are designed to equip our members with practical insights and clarity, enabling them to navigate an increasingly complex compliance landscape with confidence.

We also continue to prioritise food safety and hygiene training through our FoSTaC initiatives. Our recent sessions in South Goa and Mumbai witnessed encouraging participation, reinforcing the industry's commitment to maintaining high standards of safety and quality. As regulatory expectations evolve and consumer awareness increases, such capacity-building efforts play a vital role in strengthening trust and credibility.

We hosted the 7th HRAWI Conclave & Awards for 'Empowering Hospitality' on 29th April at Regenta The World, Surat.

The conclave featured expert-led panel discussions on critical topics including, 'Understand Adulteration in Dairy Products & Raw Materials

used in Hospitality Industry' and 'Prevent Fire by Good Maintenance and Good Housekeeping'.

The highlight of the event was a discussion on 'Induction as an alternative to conventional fuel', which shed light on the adoption of alternative fuels, including induction, in the hospitality industry. The event was followed by an awards ceremony celebrating the outstanding contributions of hospitality professionals in Surat and the South Gujarat region.

This enriching journey began in Pune and continued with events in Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Nashik, Lonavala, and Mahabaleshwar. Each edition of this conclave has helped spark invaluable conversations, deepen industry collaborations, and ignite fresh thinking within our fraternity.

While the current environment presents its share of uncertainties, it also highlights the strength, adaptability, and unity of our industry. At HRAWI, we remain committed to supporting our members, advocating for their interests, and creating platforms that drive growth, learning, and collaboration. Together, we will continue to navigate challenges and unlock new opportunities for the hospitality sector.

Warm regards,

JIMMY SHAW, President, HRAWI



AD1

AD2

10 Smart hotels plan for new laws

HRAWI and EY briefed Mumbai's hospitality leaders on navigating critical DPDP data laws, GST refinements, and significant labour wage reforms.



14 Mastering operational grit

HRAWI's 6th Conclave unifying regional leaders to master technical and honouring leaders who balance stringent food safety and data privacy.



Simplifying the complex hotel transactions

Airpay eliminates hotel payment friction by unifying offline and online transactions into one dashboard for seamless guest experiences.

24 Safety & purity mission lead

The Surat conclave empowered hoteliers to master fire safety, dairy purity, and sustainable technology while aligning with NITI Aayog's regional growth.



Elite industry-led training hub

FHRAI-IHM provides industry-backed training on a seven-acre campus, securing premier global placements through its massive network and elite academic standards.

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AD3

Goa levels up with FoSTaC

A specialised food safety workshop equipped 31 catering experts in South Goa with vital skills, ensuring higher hygiene and sanitation standards across the region.



HRAWI Bureau

South Goa's The Byke Old Anchor recently served as the training ground for the latest Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering – or FoSTaC – organised by the Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI). Held on 27 March, the session saw 31 hospitality professionals across the region gather to sharpen their technical edge under the tutelage of **Dr V Pasupathy**, Lead Expert, FoSTaC – FSSAI.

This wasn't merely a theoretical exercise. The curriculum focused on the day-to-day grit of the kitchen: food handling, waste management, and the rigorous sanitation protocols that define a world-class establishment. By bridging the gap between FSSAI regulations and practical execution, HRAWI is ensuring that "safety isn't just a plaque on the wall, but a lived practice. With this, HRAWI has now certified 3,804 industry

These training initiatives represent a vital investment in the long-term resilience of the Indian hospitality landscape

professionals through FoSTaC and FSSAI's management training programme. The association has covered a massive footprint – spanning Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, and Madhya Pradesh – and represents everything from local eateries to five-star deluxe hotels.

The significance of these training initiatives extends far beyond the immediate mastery of temperature

controls, waste segregation, and cross-contamination prevention; they represent a vital investment in the long-term resilience of the Indian hospitality landscape.

By empowering frontline staff with the authoritative insights of experts, HRAWI is fostering a culture of accountability that permeates every level of service. In an increasingly competitive global tourism market, the assurance of food safety becomes a primary differentiator.

HRAWI's mission remains clear. By upskilling the workforce, they aren't just complying with the law; they are protecting the reputation of Western India's tourism sector. These certified professionals act as ambassadors of excellence, translating complex mandates into seamless habits.

As the region continues to evolve as a culinary powerhouse, this commitment to standardised, high-calibre training ensures that growth is built on a foundation of integrity, operational precision, and an unwavering dedication to public health.



Mumbai's hospitality sharpens safety edge

HRAWI recently spearheaded a high-impact FoSTaC session at The Leela Mumbai, equipping 36 hospitality professionals with advanced FSSAI-led standards to elevate regional food safety benchmarks.

HRAWI Bureau

Mumbai's high-stakes kitchen just received a technical tune-up. Following the recent session in Goa, the momentum for elite food safety shifted to the city's financial heart on 30 March. The Leela Mumbai – a premier resort-style business hotel – hosted the latest FSSAI-led FoSTaC programme, making a strategic escalation in both professional participation and corporate oversight.

The shift from the Goa training was immediate. While the previous cohort saw 31 professionals, Mumbai's jumped to 36, reflecting a growing regional urgency.

More notably, the event was anchored by a who's who of The Leela leadership. The inauguration featured

HRAWI's certification count surged to 3,840 – surpassing the previous record of 3,804 set just days ago

Sameer Sud, General Manager, alongside **Aungshuman Chakraborty**, Executive Chef, **Sadashiv Bangera**, Head HR, and **Vivek Sukhija**, F&B Manager.

With **Titasa Trivedi**, Training Manager and **Disha Garg**, Hygiene Manager also in the mix, the message

was clear: in the 5-star world, hygiene is a top-down mandate. Under the seasoned eye of **Divya Bhaskaran**, Senior Food Safety Executive, Parikshan, the curriculum tackled the gritty realities of modern catering – from precision food handling to the uncompromising sanitation protocols that must survive the heat of a busy service.

To date, HRAWI has empowered 3,840 professionals, a sharp increase from the 3,804 count recorded just days prior.

These workshops strip away the abstract and focus on the frontline mechanics of sanitation and waste management.

In an era where a single lapse can define a brand, HRAWI is equipping Mumbai's workforce with the technical shield necessary to uphold the highest global benchmarks.



Data privacy has transitioned from a discretionary best practice to a mandatory shield for institutional reputation



Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act. **Abhijit Parab**, Partner – Cybersecurity, EY, redefined the hospitality sector's relationship with guest information, framing hotels as 'Data Fiduciaries' with significant legal exposure.

"The hospitality sector processes sensitive guest data at every touch-point – from reservations to check-

Operational resilience: Decoding compliance mandates

The HRAWI Knowledge Series II in Mumbai united industry leaders to dissect the technical complexities of data privacy, taxation, and labour reforms, fostering institutional resilience.

HRAWI Bureau

The roadmap for the Indian hospitality sector is increasingly defined by its ability to mirror global standards of transparency and digital integrity. As the industry scales toward its projected \$501 million contribution to the national GDP by 2035, the burden of regulatory navigation has shifted from the back-office to the boardroom. To address this, the Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI)

hosted its second Knowledge Series session on 10 April at The Mirador Hotel, Mumbai.

Building on the technical foundation established during the inaugural session in Pune, this Mumbai briefing – produced alongside Ernst & Young (EY) – focused on the immediate financial and legal pressures reshaping the western region's hospitality landscape.

The Data Fiduciary

The day's deliberations opened with a critical examination of the



outs,” Parab observed. He urged delegates to view data not as a passive asset, but as a potential liability. For Mumbai’s high-traffic establishments, the cost of a security lapse is now quantifiable; under the new framework, penalties for failing to implement security safeguards can reach an unprecedented ₹250 crore per instance. The session underscored that privacy is no longer a discretionary service – it is a mandatory shield for institutional reputation.

Indirect tax precision

On the taxation front, **Akshit Saraogi**, Director – Global Trade and Customs, EY, unpacked the administrative refinements within the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime. A primary focus was the ‘Specified Premises’ criteria, a rule that remains a point of friction for hotel accounting departments. The discussion clarified that if any single room within an establishment is priced above the ₹7,500 threshold, the 18 per cent tax rate is triggered for all associated food and beverage services.

Furthermore, the task of managing proportionate Input Tax Credit (ITC) reversals for common inputs – ranging from capital goods to utilities – requires a level of accounting granularity that many units have yet to automate. The takeaway for Mumbai’s fraternity was clear: fiscal efficiency now demands the seamless integration of POS systems with real-time compliance engines.

Labour code transition

Perhaps the most significant structural shift discussed involved the consolidation of twenty-nine central labour laws into four comprehensive codes. **Anshul Shukla** and **Siladitya Dasgupta**, Directors, EY Consulting,



Immediate assessments are essential to align payroll with new wage definitions and manage liabilities

provided a roadmap for navigating the new definitions of ‘Wages’ and ‘Social Security’.

For a labour-intensive industry, the most impactful change is the revised wage definition, which mandates that allowances cannot exceed 50 per cent of the total remuneration. Internal simulations shared during the session suggested that this recalibration could cause gratuity and bonus liabilities to surge by as much as 60 per cent. HRAWI members were cautioned that immediate payroll audits are essential to align current salary structures with these looming statutory increases.

Fiscal Advocacy

Amidst these rising operational costs, the Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024 offers a vital counterbalance for infrastructure growth. **Nikhil Padhye**,

Senior Manager at EY, detailed the menu of incentives available under the state’s ₹1,666 crore annual budget.

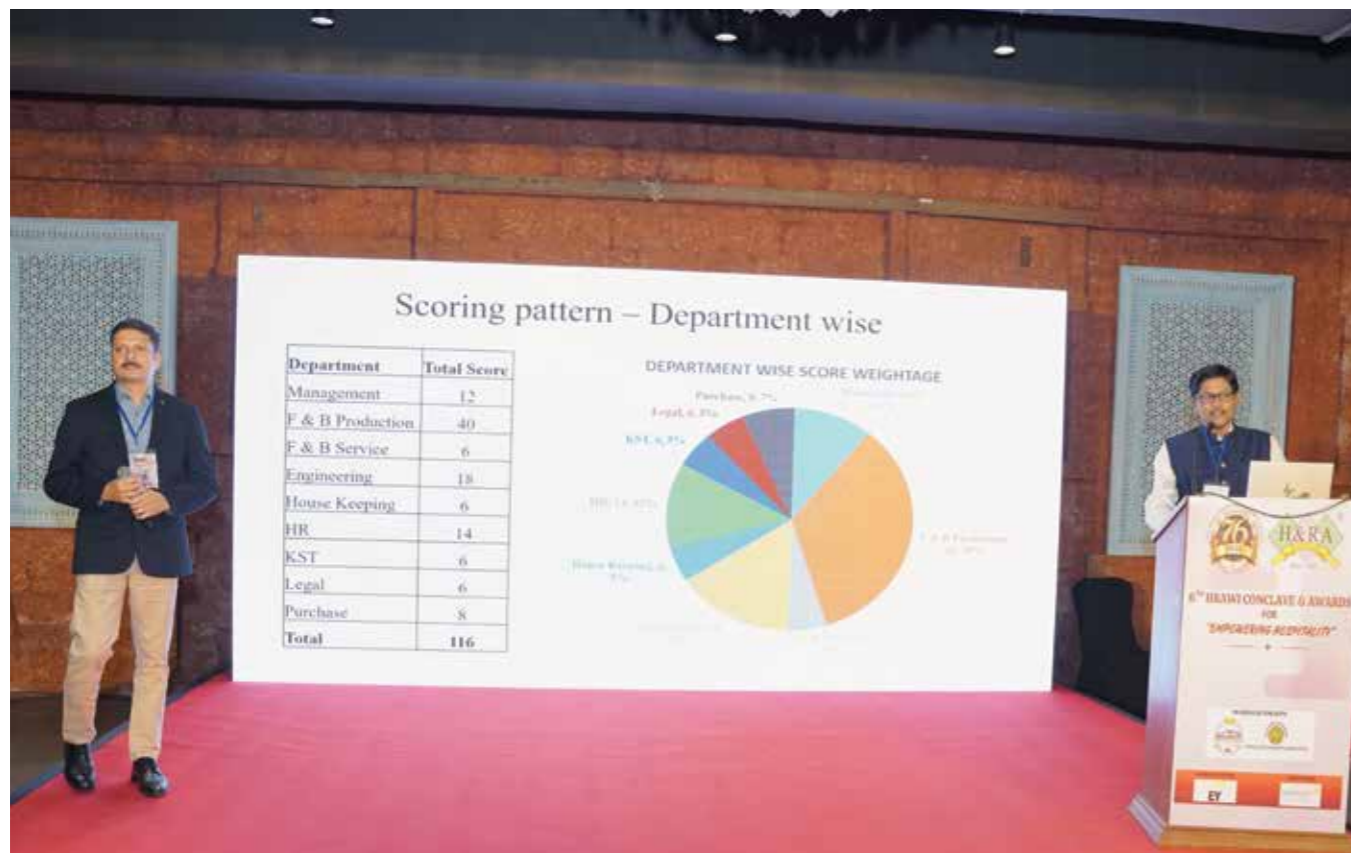
The policy is particularly geared toward brownfield projects in space-starved urban hubs like Mumbai, offering incentives for expansion units that achieve a capacity increase of over 50 per cent. Notably, the definition of Eligible Capital Investment (ECI) has been modernised to include green infrastructure, such as captive renewable energy plants and electric vehicle charging stations – reflecting the state’s commitment to sustainable tourism development.

A future-ready sector

Closing the day, **Gurbir Singh Bedi**, Jt Hon Secretary, HRAWI, reinforced the necessity of these technical sessions: “From data protection and tax compliance to labour reforms and State incentives, these sessions equip our members with the clarity and confidence to navigate complexity.”

As the Knowledge Series continues its monthly journey through Goa, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh, the Mumbai session has highlighted a critical truth: the path to growth is paved with regulatory discipline. By mastering the nuances of the law, HRAWI members are not merely avoiding penalties – they are securing their position at the forefront of India’s tourism renaissance. ♦♦

AD4



HRAWI conclave sounds compliance alarm

The 6th HRAWI Conclave in Mahabaleshwar brought together regional leaders to address critical legal mandates in food safety and data protection while celebrating industry-wide operational excellence.

HRAWI Bureau

The heavy mist over the Sahyadris usually signals a weekend retreat, but for the hospitality leaders gathered at Ramsukh Resorts & Spa on 26th February, the focus was strictly on the bottom line. The Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI) hosted the 6th edition of its 'Empowering Hospitality' Conclave and Awards, creating a high-stakes environment where hotel owners and restaurateurs from Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani could tackle the mounting legal pressure of the modern trade.

Kitchen: Legal liability

The morning's technical sessions moved immediately into the "dirty" details of food safety. **Dr. V. Pasupathy**, Food Safety Expert and Founder, Parikshan FSS, delivered a blunt assessment of the Food Safety and Standard Act. His message was a sharp wake-up call: In the current judicial climate, a pest sighting in a professional kitchen is no longer a minor lapse – it is a definitive compliance failure with severe legal teeth.

"Under the Food Safety and Standards Act, pest presence in a hotel kitchen is not viewed as a minor lapse; it is treated as a

Pest sighting in a professional kitchen is not a minor lapse – it is a definitive compliance failure

Hospitality must align cybersecurity with business strategy, ensuring resilience, regulatory readiness, and trust

compliance failure with serious legal consequences. Hotels must ensure pest-free kitchens, proper documentation, CIB&RC-approved chemicals, and trained service providers at all times," Pasupathy noted. He emphasised a point that many owners are still catching up to: liability is no longer siloed. "In the event of contamination, liability does not rest solely with the vendor; hotel management, including senior leadership, may be held accountable. Preventive compliance, structured documentation, and scientifically designed food safety systems are far more cost-effective than the reputational and legal damage that

follows a single incident," he added.

Jitender Gawade, Key Account Manager, ENVU, pushed this further by addressing the brand protection angle of pest management. He argued that the old-school spray model is effectively dead. "In hospitality, pest management is not a housekeeping task or a cost centre, it is a legal safeguard and brand protection strategy. One pest sighting can result in online reputation damage, audit non-conformance, insurance complications, and even a 10–20 per cent drop in occupancy," Gawade stated. For him, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the new insurance policy. "Today, pest control is about protecting your licence, your reputation, and your leadership position in hospitality," he said.

DPDP Act: Data sovereignty

The conversation then shifted from the physical kitchen to the invisible risks of the server room. A specialised team from Ernst & Young – including **Abhijit Parab**, Partner – Cyber Security, **Madhusmita Panda**, Senior Manager, and **Arvinder Layal**, Manager – dissected the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act. For many regional players, data

security has long felt like a problem for the tech giants, but Parab made it clear that every hotelier handling guest IDs or payment info is now a data fiduciary.

"The DPDP Act marks a decisive shift in how Indian organisations must approach data governance and information security. Compliance is no longer limited to drafting privacy policies; it requires structured data discovery and mapping, third-party risk assessments, cyber incident monitoring, vulnerable testing, and continuous employee awareness," Parab explained. He stressed that in today's threat landscape, hospitality businesses must align cybersecurity with business strategy, ensuring resilience, regulatory readiness, and trust in every digital interaction.

Regional excellence

Following the intensive knowledge sessions, the focus shifted to the HRAWI Awards, an evening dedicated to those who have shaped the regional tourism landscape. The ceremony was graced by the chief guest, **Jayasinh Mariwala**, Chairman, OmniActive Health Technologies, Food Service (India) Pvt Ltd, and Autohangar India Pvt Ltd. The awards





ceremony recognised outstanding contributions across categories, including innovation, leadership, sustainability, legacy, and operational excellence.

Shared future vision

Jimmy Shaw, President, HRAWI, concluded the event by reminding the audience that the industry now operates in an increasingly regulated and digitally connected environment. He placed a heavy emphasis on the fact that preparedness is no longer a luxury but the foundation of sustainable growth.

“From food safety compliance and pest risk management to data protection and cybersecurity,

preparedness is no longer optional; it is fundamental to sustainable growth. Through the HRAWI Conclave & Awards held in Mahabaleshwar, we aim to empower our members across regions with knowledge, encourage responsible leadership, and promote a collaborative ecosystem that strengthens hospitality across Western India,” he stated.

In his closing address, he further noted the dual purpose of the gathering: “The Conclave also serves as a platform to recognise outstanding leaders and achievers from each area and region, bringing our hospitality fraternity together in celebration of excellence and shared progress. I extend my heartfelt appreciation

to the hospitality professionals whose commitment and exceptional work have propelled the growth of tourism and hospitality across Mahabaleshwar, Panchgani, and the nearby locations.”

By moving this conclave to the hill circuits of Mahabaleshwar, HRAWI has underscored that excellence is a moving target. In a landscape defined by rapid regulation and digital transformation, the conclave proved that Western India’s hoteliers must remain wide awake to the technical and legal challenges of 2026. Sustainable success now requires a balance of world-class guest service and uncompromising governance behind the scenes. ♦♦



Architecture & Heritage Hospitality Excellence: Fountain Taj, received by Gaurav Chandan, Owner; presented by Pralhad Rathi, Area Nominee - Mahabaleshwar, HRAWI

Fountain Taj stands out for its distinctive architectural and heritage-inspired design in Mahabaleshwar. The property reflects traditional aesthetics while offering comfortable accommodations, bespoke amenities, and warm hospitality. By integrating classic craftsmanship with contemporary luxury, the estate ensures that the historical essence of Mahabaleshwar remains a living, breathing part of every guest’s refined and authentic experience. ■



Best Adventure Resorts: Evershine Resort and Spa Mahabaleshwar, received by Navin Kumar, Operation Manager; presented by Chetan Mehta, VP, HRAWI

Evershine Resort and Spa offers a dynamic blend of luxury and recreation, making it a preferred destination for adventure and activity-driven stays. With expansive outdoor spaces, curated recreational experiences, and facilities for team-building and outdoor engagements, the resort caters to guests seeking both comfort and excitement. Its vibrant atmosphere and diverse amenities position it as a leading adventure-oriented resort in the region. ■



Best Amusement Park: On Wheelz Amusement Park - Kokanratna Holiday Resorts Pvt Ltd, received by Aditya Saiprasad Samant, Director; presented by Dilip Kothari, Special Invitee & Hon Tax Advisor, HRAWI

On Wheelz Amusement Park is a premier recreational destination offering diverse amusement rides and adventure activities. Successfully combining entertainment with professional hospitality, it caters to families, school groups, and leisure visitors seeking excitement. The park’s vibrant facilities have significantly enhanced the region’s appeal, establishing it as a fun-filled, landmark tourism destination in Mahabaleshwar. ■



Best Boutique Resort - Mahabaleshwar: Bella Vista, received by Yashi Gaur, Director; presented by Dilip Kothari, Special Invitee & Hon Tax Advisor, HRAWI

Bella Vista stands out as a premier boutique-style property, offering breathtaking scenic views and exceptionally comfortable stays. It provides well-maintained, elegant rooms and attentive, personalised service. The property appeals to discerning guests looking for a cosy, relaxed, and authentic holiday experience. By combining modern amenities with a tranquil atmosphere, it ensures a memorable retreat that perfectly captures the serene essence and natural beauty of the region. ■



Best Boutique Resort - Panchgani: Prospect Hotel, received by Shahram Javanmardi, Owner; presented by Narendra Somani, EC Member, HRAWI

Prospect Hotel provides reliable, budget-friendly accommodation for tourists visiting Mahabaleshwar. It offers a highly convenient location near key sightseeing points, ensuring ease of travel. The hotel is perfectly suited for families and independent travellers seeking value-for-money stays without compromising on quality. By focusing on practical hospitality and accessibility, it serves as an ideal base for guests eager to explore the region’s natural beauty and historical landmarks. ■



Best Iconic Hotel - Panchgani: Il Palazzo Villas, received by Lilly Kobad Davierwalla; presented by Mohd Nayeem Sait, EC Member, HRAWI

Il Palazzo Villas offers an exquisite, villa-style luxury accommodation specifically designed for privacy, exclusivity, and refined comfort. This historic heritage retreat in Panchgani has graciously welcomed guests for approx 100 years, establishing a prestigious legacy. The property provides personalised hospitality, seamlessly blending traditional Parsi warmth with elegant colonial architecture. It serves as an ideal sanctuary for families and groups seeking a private and nostalgic getaway. ■



Best Luxury Stay: Brightland Resort & Spa, received by Vijay Shewakramani, Managing Director; presented by Anil Patodia, Area Nominee - Matheran, HRAWI

Brightland Resort & Spa stands as a premier 4-star luxury retreat, elegantly sprawling across 6.5 acres of lush greenery at an altitude of 4,400 feet in Mahabaleshwar. This sophisticated property offers a refined and indulgent stay, defined by panoramic views of the Krishna River Valley and Sahyadri mountain ranges. It features high-end amenities like the rejuvenating Prana Spa, a solar-heated outdoor pool, and four distinct specialty restaurants. ■



Best New Hotel - Mahabaleshwar: Tranquil Resort and Spa, received by Nihal Dilip Shinde, Owner; presented by Pradeep Shetty, Hon Secretary, HRAWI

Tranquil Resort and Spa is a premier boutique luxury property, renowned for its serene surroundings and breathtaking, panoramic valley views. The resort offers exceptionally well-appointed rooms, rejuvenating spa services, and curated dining experiences that celebrate local and international flavours. It caters specifically to leisure travellers seeking privacy and a peaceful hill-station retreat. With the natural tranquillity of the Sahyadri ranges, it ensures a truly refined guest experience. ■



Best Restaurant - Mahabaleshwar: 7 Grand Lounge, received by Vishaka Ayalur, Owner; presented by Narendra Somani, Area Nominee - Gujarat, HRAWI

7 Grand Restaurant Lounge & Bar, situated in the heart of Mahabaleshwar's main market, stands as a premier modern hospitality venue. This popular rooftop destination offers a vibrant atmosphere, combining contemporary interiors with a lively dining experience. Renowned for its cozy ambiance, signature cocktails, and a diverse menu spanning Indian, Chinese, and Italian cuisines, it caters perfectly to family dinners and social gatherings. It provides a sophisticated evening outing for discerning guests. ■



Best Valley View Hotel: Hotel Gautam, received by Ramesh Kaul, Owner; presented by Anil Patodia, Area Nominee - Matheran, HRAWI

Hotel Gautam offers breathtaking views of the surrounding valleys, providing guests with an exceptionally serene and attractive hill-station experience. Its prime location allows visitors to enjoy scenic sunrises and the untouched natural beauty of Mahabaleshwar. The hotel creates a truly refreshing, restorative getaway. By focusing on guest comfort and the region's spectacular landscapes, it ensures a memorable stay that perfectly captures the tranquil essence of the Sahyadri ranges. ■



Contribution to Eco-Tourism - Mahabaleshwar: Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa, received by Reshma Godbole, Director, presented by Jimmy Shaw, President, HRAWI

Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa has made notable contributions to eco-tourism by operating in harmony with its natural surroundings amidst the lush greenery of Mahabaleshwar. The resort promotes responsible hospitality practices while offering premium accommodations, wellness facilities, and curated guest experiences. By integrating sustainability with global hospitality standards, the property supports environmentally conscious tourism in the region. ■



Transformative Impact on Tourism Development: Bharat Hotel, Mahabaleshwar, received by Aniket Agarwal, Owner; presented by Ramesh Kaul, Owner, Hotel Gautam

Bharat Hotel has played a foundational role in shaping the region's tourism landscape. Through its unwavering consistency, traditional hospitality, and celebrated vegetarian dining offerings, the hotel has remained a cherished destination for generations of visitors. By preserving local charm while adapting to the needs of the modern traveller, it continues to stand as a testament to the region's rich heritage of service. ■



Best Restaurant - Panchgani: Café Cocano, received by Karan Tejani, Partner; presented by Madhav Todi, Area Nominee - Lonavala, HRAWI

Café Cocano is a premier casual dining destination, offering a relaxed ambiance and a diverse variety of popular dishes in Mahabaleshwar. Renowned for its cosy, inviting interiors and consistently friendly service, the café attracts a vibrant mix of both tourists and local visitors alike. It serves as an exceptionally comfortable spot for quick bites and specialty beverages. By combining a warm atmosphere with quality refreshments, it provides a delightful and accessible culinary retreat. ■



Best Strawberry-to-Table Concept: Mapro Garden, received by Ms Gauri Sawant, General Manager - Operations; presented by Amit Kumar Sharma, Area Nominee - Pune, HRAWI

Mapro Garden stands as a leading agri-tourism destination in Panchgani. Celebrated through its diverse range of strawberry-based products, vibrant food court, and extensive retail outlet, it showcases a true "strawberry-to-table" experience. Its commitment to quality and community engagement ensures a unique, immersive experience, positioning it as a landmark site for visitors seeking authentic, fruit-focused hospitality. ■



Best Traditional Thali: Uday Hotel Mahabaleshwar, received by Uday Shah, General Manager; presented by Narendra Somani, EC Member, HRAWI

Uday Hotel Mahabaleshwar is renowned for its authentic and flavourful traditional thali, offering guests a true taste of regional cuisine. The property has built a strong reputation for preserving local culinary traditions while delivering warm hospitality. Its commitment to quality and authenticity makes it a preferred choice for visitors seeking a genuine dining experience. The hotel ensures a memorable, wholesome, and culturally rich culinary journey for every discerning traveller. ■



Excellent Contribution to Tourism in Mahabaleshwar: Ramsukh Resorts & Spa, received by Pralhad Rathi, Owner; presented by Sherry Bhatia, Past President, HRAWI

Pralhad Rathi, Owner, Ramsukh Resorts & Spa, showed unwavering dedication and visionary commitment to hospitality, which has significantly enriched the region's tourism growth, reputation, and service standards. He has played a pivotal role in establishing the hill station as a premier destination. This recognition celebrates his leadership, passion, and tireless efforts in shaping a more vibrant and inclusive hospitality landscape. ■



Founder's Excellence in Regional Cuisine: Hotel Dreamland, received by Manish Tejani, Partner; presented by Kamlesh Barot, Past President, HRAWI

Hotel Dreamland stands as a premier resort property. It offers a diverse range of room categories, versatile banquet spaces, and premium recreational amenities to suit every guest. Popular among families, tour groups, and corporate gatherings, the hotel provides a comprehensive hospitality experience. By combining modern dining options, it ensures a memorable and comfortable stay for large groups and leisure seekers, reinforcing its status as a landmark destination. ■



General Manager of the Year - Mahabaleshwar: Manoj Varma, Senior General Manager, Evershine Resort and Spa; presented by Carl Costa, EC Member, HRAWI

Manoj Varma is a distinguished hospitality professional with over 25 years of experience. His career is marked by prestigious recognitions, such as Hospitality Person of the Year 2014, Hotel of the Year, and multiple Times Food Guide Awards. A recipient of the TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Award and the TMC Award for Excellence, he has also been nominated among the Best General Managers at the Hotelier India Awards. ■



Innovation in Dining: Vyanjan Fine N Dine, received by Ajay Shashikant Shinde, Director; presented by Kamlesh Barot, Past President, HRAWI

Vyanjan Fine N Dine stands as a premier specialty restaurant, offering a curated culinary experience that defines gastronomic excellence in the region. Renowned for its high-quality cuisine and sophisticated, refined ambiance, it caters perfectly to both discerning international tourists and local patrons alike. By harmonising traditional flavours with contemporary culinary techniques, it ensures a memorable dining journey that remains a preferred choice for those seeking a premium food experience. ■



Lifetime Achievement Award: Fountain Taj, received by Gaurav Chandan, Owner; presented by Paramjit Singh Gai, Honorary Treasurer & Office Bearer, HRAWI

Fountain Taj stands as a premier hospitality establishment in Mahabaleshwar, offering comfortable accommodations and excellent dining facilities. The property focuses on delivering a pleasant, welcoming, and affordable stay experience without compromising on quality. By providing practical amenities and warm service, it serves families and tourists eager to explore the natural beauty. ■



Sustainable Hospitality: Mapro Garden, received by Mayur Vora, CMD; presented by Mohd Nayeem Sait, EC Member, HRAWI

Mapro Garden is a renowned agri-tourism destination in Panchgani, distinguished by its commitment to promoting local produce and providing vital support to the farming community. Through its innovative farm-to-consumer model and dedicated eco-conscious initiatives, the establishment plays a significant role in advancing sustainable hospitality in the region. Mapro Garden fosters a deep appreciation for the environment and ensures a positive social impact. ■



Group photograph of all the awardees of Mahabaleshwar Conclave

Payment headaches now passe for modern hotels



Managing hospitality payments shouldn't feel like a second job. Airpay offers a unified backbone of online and offline transactions, ensuring seamless guest experiences and faster settlements.

HRAWI Bureau

In the daily rush of a busy property, payments are rarely straightforward. Front-desk teams often find themselves caught between hundreds of guest bills, restaurant tabs, and security deposits, and delicate refund requests.

Trying to sync the Point of Sale (POS) systems with online gateways and manual payment links usually results in a messy operational soup that leaves front-desk staff stressed and guests frustrated. Most gateways just aren't built for the nuances of a hotel's workflow. That is exactly where Airpay steps in to trim the fat.

Airpay advantage

Why juggle five different vendors when you can have one? Airpay

provides a unified dashboard that consolidates QR codes, card machines, and payment links into a single reconciliation point.

- **Cash Flow that keeps up:** With T+1 settlements, your money moves as fast as your occupancy rates.

- **Kill the refund chaos:** Our pre-authorisation feature blocks funds until checkout. This means no unnecessary refund processing, fewer disputes, and much cleaner audits for your accounting team.

- **Global reach:** From international credit cards to dynamic currency conversion, your global guests will feel right at home.

Why hotels trust Airpay

As an RBI-approved, homegrown platform, Airpay understands the local market better than anyone. We support over 160 payment instruments and back it all up

Airpay streamlines hotel operations by unifying POS, online payments, and settlements into one powerful dashboard

with dedicated human support. Hospitality demands perfection. Your payment system should be no exception. Airpay ensures smoother operations, happier guests, faster checkouts, better control, and a seamless financial experience across every touchpoint. ♦♦

FHRAI and Axis Bank arm local operators with fiscal muscle

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has entered into a strategic partnership with Axis Bank – a move specifically designed to address the persistent credit gap within the country’s hospitality sector. By signing a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the two organisations aim to streamline the flow of capital to hoteliers and restaurateurs, many of whom have historically struggled to secure traditional institutional lending.

This collaboration focuses on providing tailored financial suites, including working capital, term loans, and structured financing, to help businesses manage fluctuating costs and scaling opportunities. Beyond mere lending, the partnership seeks to integrate the unorganised hospitality segment into the formal banking fold. Axis Bank is rolling out specialised merchant services, cash management solutions, and concessions on POS rentals – tools meticulously designed to align with the industry’s unique cash-flow cycles.

FHRAI leadership believes this institutional backing is essential



for upgrading service standards, particularly in tier II and tier III markets. By providing smaller operators with the same fiscal muscle as international chains, the initiative ensures local players remain competitive as the Indian market expands.

The partnership was recently showcased at the Wedding & MICE Tourism Conclave in Lucknow, underlining a commitment to on-ground engagement. Through dedicated relationship management

and digital payment modernisation, Axis Bank and FHRAI are creating a robust ecosystem that prioritises stability, connectivity, and financial inclusivity for businesses across the tourism landscape. ■



Western India hospitality bodies join forces

The Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI) has just inked a strategic MoU with the Indore Hoteliers Association (IHA) and the Lonavala Khandala Hotel and Restaurant Association (LKHRA). HRAWI acts as the Principal Partner, while the other two come in as Regional Partners. This move is to create a more unified front for the hospitality sector when dealing with policy and regulatory challenges. The main goal here is to fix the lack of coordination between local and national bodies. By bringing IHA and LKHRA into the fold, HRAWI wants to scale up membership and tackle issues – like the specific infrastructure needs in Lonavala’s MICE market. **Jimmy Shaw**, President, HRAWI, noted that joining forces is about creating a louder voice for advocacy. It is a classic move to ensure that local trade concerns actually make it to the national level. ■



Growth outruns talent in hospitality sector

India is seeing a massive surge in hotel signings and new builds, but the sector is hitting a wall: a serious lack of leadership talent. The physical construction of new properties is currently moving way faster than the leadership bench can keep up with. There is a critical shortage of General Managers and senior executives capable of running international-standard operations. The old slow climb career path just isn’t cutting it anymore for the current pace of growth. Industry veterans are calling for a total rethink, pushing for aggressive mentorship and fast-track training to get mid-level managers ready for the C-suite. Without a solid pipeline of human capital, the billions being poured into new hotel infrastructure might not see the expected returns. The industry’s biggest hurdle right now isn’t building the rooms – it is finding the people to lead them. ■



Hotels pivot to nature-centric design models



Biophilic design is moving from a decorative extra to a core architectural requirement for Indian hospitality projects. Developers are now using living walls, natural lighting, and raw organic materials as a baseline for new builds. The goal is simple: offer a sensory escape from urban density. It is less about greenery and more about the measurable impact on guest well-being and dwell time, which is currently a major draw for the luxury and wellness segments. On the operational side, these features are actually functional. Natural ventilation and integrated plant life help with air filtration and thermal regulation, lowering the load on HVAC systems. A trend can be seen where guests actively pay a premium for rooms with nature-connected layouts. As ESG scores become a standard, biophilia is being used to bridge the gap between high-end luxury and building efficiency. It is a shift toward living architecture that prioritises long-term utility. ■

Major 125 hotel expansion for Hilton in India



Hilton just signed a major licensing deal with Royal Orchid Hotels to roll out 125 Hilton Garden Inn properties across India. Under the pact, Royal Orchid will manage the development and day-to-day ops, while Hilton brings the brand name, global distribution, and its loyalty network. This partnership signals a change in Hilton’s local strategy – switching from slow, one-off builds to a high-speed scale model. By using Royal Orchid’s existing local footprint, Hilton can move faster to capture the rising demand from domestic business travellers. Industry insiders see this as a direct play for dominance in India’s smaller hubs. The plan is to create a wide highway and city network, making Hilton Garden Inn a standard choice for the country’s massive, growing middle-class travel base. ■



Safety, sustainability & standards headline Surat conclave

With a deep focus on fire prevention and dairy purity, the HRAWI Surat edition reinforced the industry's commitment to guest safety and operational excellence.

HRAWI Bureau

Let's be honest: the hospitality game is shifting so fast that simply offering a clean bed and a decent meal won't cut it anymore. On 29 April, the Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI) descended upon Surat for the 7th edition of its "Empowering Hospitality" Conclave & Awards. Held at Regenta The World, this wasn't just another industry mixer. It was a high-stakes workshop where hotel owners, restaurateurs, and technical pros sat down to tear apart and rebuild the future of the trade.

Surat is a town built on a relentless business spirit, making it the perfect backdrop for a day designed to spark genuine, unfiltered dialogue. This edition follows a successful trail through cities like Pune, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Nashik, Lonavala, Indore, and Mahabaleshwar.

It proves that HRAWI is dead serious about taking professional expertise directly to the doorstep of its regional members, rather than waiting for them to come to the metros.

Empowering hospitality

The whole point of this initiative is to bridge the massive gap between

Good housekeeping and good maintenance are actually the most effective fire extinguishers a hotelier owns

The goal is to move the industry to where safety and excellence are baked into the daily DNA of the service

dusty textbook theory and the high-pressure reality of a five-star hotel floor. During his welcome address, **Nirav Gandhi**, Senior Vice President, HRAWI, made it clear that this conclave is a tactical tool. He wants to arm the fraternity with "forward-looking knowledge". The goal is to move the industry from a reactive state to a proactive one — where safety and excellence are baked into the daily DNA of the service rather than being an afterthought.

Pillar I: Food purity

One slip in food safety can kill a brand's reputation faster than a string of bad reviews. That is why the conclave took a hard, unvarnished look at food adulteration, specifically in dairy

and raw materials. In an industry where dairy is the heart of the menu, purity isn't just a preference — it's a non-negotiable requirement for maintaining guest trust.

Shahid Haradwala, Food Analyst, Surat Municipal Corporation, gave a sobering talk on the technical side of testing and safety. Local veterans like **Viren Shah**, Chairman and Managing Director, Jivraj Tea, and **Yashpal Patel**, Owner, Vijay Dairy, didn't sugarcoat the reality of maintaining supply chain integrity.

The panel delved into identifying common contaminants in milk and oils, which are the backbone of commercial kitchens. The room focused on spotting fakes before they even hit the stove, ensuring the culinary experience remains untainted.

Pillar II: Fire safety

Guest safety is a silent, sacred promise, and fire is the ultimate betrayer of that promise. The conclave shifted the focus from emergency response to daily prevention, arguing that the best fire is the one that never actually starts. Panelists hammered home the idea that good housekeeping and good maintenance are actually the most effective fire extinguishers a hotelier owns.

Anil Bharodia, Fire Safety Officer – Specialist, Government of Gujarat,

highlighted the protocols that often get ignored during the daily rush of service. The sessions explored how technical engineering and "Flam O Nil" technologies can kill fire triggers in commercial kitchens and laundry areas before they spark. **Basawan**, CSO, Regenta – The World, underscored the importance of live fire exit demonstrations to ensure staff readiness.

Pillar III: Sustainability

Moving toward sustainable energy isn't just a green trend; it's a survival move for modern operations. The conclave explored alternative energy as a path toward both safety and cutting costs. A major focus was placed on adopting induction technology as an alternative to conventional fuels like LPG.

Experts analysed how induction cooking drops the ambient heat in the kitchen — a huge win for staff comfort — and slashes fire risks. This transition fits a broader mission to embrace modern tech and reduce the industry's carbon footprint while maintaining high-volume output.

The NITI Aayog plan

HRAWI isn't just looking at the next guest check; it is looking at the next decade of regional growth. A standout segment featured a presentation by the BRCM College of Business





Administration on “Developing Tourism in the Surat Economic Region (SER)”. Led by **Dr Ushma Desai** and her team, the presentation wasn't just theory.

This vision is specifically aligned with NITI Aayog's Economic Master Plan, positioning Surat as a massive hub for future tourism and economic activity. The goal is to turn the SER into a destination that rivals India's current tourism heavyweights.

Dignitaries and leadership

The event carried serious weight, underscored by the presence of high-

By focusing on dairy purity, fire safety systems, and sustainable fuels, HRAWI is empowering its members to lead with integrity

ranking officials who see hospitality as a major economic engine. **Sumit Kumar**, IRS, Principal Additional Director General, DGTA, MZU, DGTS, MZU, Customs & Central Excise Department, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, as a guest of honour, provided invaluable insights from the Ministry of Finance, helping bridge the gap between tax policy and the service industry.

M Nagarajan, IAS, Commissioner of Surat Municipal Corporation, joined as Chief Guest, highlighted the vital synergy between local government and the hospitality trade.



Nirav Gandhi, Sr VP, HRAWI, felicitated by Arun Shetty, President, SHARA



Sanat Relia, Vice President, SHARA, felicitated by Chetan Mehta, VP, HRAWI



Anil Desai, Proprietor, Flame O Nil Technologies, Surat, felicitated by Dilip Datwani, Post President, HRAWI



Shahid Haradwala, Food Analyst, Surat Municipal Corp, felicitated by Paramjit Singh Ghai, Hon Treasurer, HRAWI



Presentation by BRCM College of Business Administration on “Developing Tourism in Surat Economic Region (SER) in Alignment with NITI Ayog's Economic Master Plan”



Yashpal Patel, Owner, Vijay Dairy, Surat, felicitated by Nirav Gandhi, Sr Vice President, HRAWI



Dharmishta Mevawala, Area Sales Manager, Sarvottam Oil, felicitated by Suhas Awchani, EC Member, HRAWI



Nikhil Madrasi, President, SGCCI, felicitated by Arun Shetty, President, SHARA, and Sanat Relia, VP, SHARA



Chetan Mehta, Vice President, HRAWI

Remarks by **Arun Shetty**, President, Southern Gujarat Hotel & Restaurant Association (SHARA) and **Sanat Relia**, Vice President, SHARA set a tone of deep regional cooperation. **Nikhil Madrasi**, President, SGCCI, added his voice to the call for individual development within the hospitality workforce.

Celebrating hospitality

The day ended with the HRAWI Awards, celebrating the establishments and individuals who have meaningfully raised industry standards across South Gujarat. HRAWI felicitated **Chander Baljee**,

Managing Director, Royal Orchid Hotels, for his massive, career-long contributions to Indian hospitality. The Association also honoured **Arun Shetty** and **Sanat Relia** for their vision and dedication to South Gujarat's growth. Awards were handed out for innovation, leadership, and sustainability, recognising those setting new benchmarks for the entire fraternity.

A collective mission

The 7th HRAWI Conclave in Surat was more than a regional meeting; it was a testament to the industry's collective mission to elevate every

aspect of the guest experience. By focusing on unseen pillars — like dairy purity, fire safety systems, and sustainable fuels — HRAWI is empowering its members to lead with integrity. As Gandhi noted, the commitment of these professionals is what propels the growth of tourism across Western India. Every protocol learned and every award won in Surat is a step toward a safer, more resilient hospitality future.

The road from Pune to Surat has been long, but the destination is clear: a professional, safe, and world-class hospitality landscape for all of Western India. ♦♦

Koyna fest makes Sahyadri's Satara shine



The Koyna Daulat Dongri Festival 2026 wrapped up on 9 April, pulling in a staggering crowd of over 2 lakh visitors. This unexpected turnout followed a strategic three-day extension ordered by **Ek Nath Shinde**, Deputy Chief Minister, on 6 April, effectively turning a regional gathering into a statewide phenomenon. The festival's success wasn't just about the scenery; it was the sheer variety of the programming. While cultural stages showcased traditional folk arts, the water sports arena saw over 13,000 thrill seekers. Beyond the adrenaline, the event served as a platform for local women's self-help groups and livestock farmers to reach a massive new audience. For the government, this was as much about infrastructure as it was about entertainment. Shinde utilised the closing ceremonies to inaugurate the Sangwad Bridge and the Shivajirao Daulat Stadium, signalling that the Sahyadri region is being prepped for high-end international travel. With a winter backwater festival already on horizon, Satara is no longer just a weekend getaway — it's becoming a global contender. ■

Soulinaire collab, a new chapter for IF.BE portfolio

Mumbai's Ballard Estate is witnessing a unique fusion of grit and glamour. Soulinaire, the luxury catering arm of Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), has officially partnered with IF.BE, the 150-year-old restored Ice Factory. This isn't just a food deal; it's about merging IHCL's massive operational muscle with a space famous for avant-garde architecture and art. Kamal Malik, Founding Partner, IF.BE, views this as a way to bring culinary refinement to IF.BE's existing cultural soul. The collaboration covers everything from daily dining at the Banyan Tree Café and Native Bombay to high-stakes luxury events in "The Cathedral" and "The Ice Factory" galleries. For Somnath Mukherjee, Executive Vice President – Operations, IHCL, this move injects world-class service standards into one of the city's most historic urban fabrics. By blending Soulinaire's knack for high-volume, personalised catering with IF.BE's design-heavy atmosphere, the partnership sets a new benchmark for how Mumbai experiences heritage spaces. ■



Madhya Pradesh homestays draw tourists to villages

Madhya Pradesh is seeing a major win with its rural tourism push. In just two years, over 34,000 travellers have ditched standard hotels to stay in village homestays. Local families have already earned ₹6.76 crore by hosting visitors, showing that the "Heart of India" can actually pay the bills for rural communities. Currently, 346 homestays are active across nearly 100 villages, with hundreds more being built. Places like Khari have become success stories, drawing in global delegates and curious tourists alike. Guests aren't just sleeping there; they're eating jowar rotis and trying their hand at pottery. By turning traditional life into a premium experience, the state is creating real jobs and proving that the future of travel might just be a quiet village sunrise. ■

Sula expands Nashik footprint with Chandon

Sula Vineyards is doubling down on its Dindori operations by acquiring Moët Hennessy's Chandon estate in Nashik. This deal, structured as an asset purchase through Sula's subsidiary, Artisan Spirits, includes 19 acres of prime land and a high-end centre. While the Chandon brand isn't part of the sale, the infrastructure is a massive win for Sula. The facility currently handles 4.5 lakh litres of wine but can be scaled up to a whopping 13 lakh litres. **Rajeev Samant**, CEO, Sula, plans to turn this site into a premier wine tourism destination, mirroring their success at their flagship Nashik resort. The estate's location near Nashik Airport and Sula's existing vineyards make the logistics a no-brainer. Once the deal closes in early FY27, Chandon will officially exit Indian wine production. For Sula, this is now about owning the premium hospitality space in India's wine capital. ■



Radisson brings global network to historic Gwalior

Radisson Hotel Group just moved into Gwalior, launching Hotel Gwalior Regency under its "Radisson Individuals" banner. This is the group's first real footprint in the city, and the timing is smart. Gwalior is currently blowing up as a mix of heritage hotspot and a growing industrial centre. By setting up right by the railway station, they're positioning themselves as the go-to spot for both weekend tourists hitting Gwalior Fort and corporate travellers on the move. The setup is built for the local market — 51 rooms and a massive 6,500 sq ft of banquet space. That's a clear play for the city's big wedding and conference business. The goal here is to keep the hotel's local soul but back it up with Radisson's global tech and loyalty perks. This expansion move is to bring international polish to a city that's ready for the big leagues. ■

Holiday Inn Express Surat marks IHG's Gujarat push

IHG Hotels & Resorts has officially signed the Holiday Inn Express Surat Gauravpath, marking its debut in one of Gujarat's most aggressive commercial markets. Partnering with The Gauravpath Hospitality, this 175-room new build is scheduled to open in 2029. The project is a direct play for the "Diamond City's" massive influx of corporate travellers, particularly those tied to the textile, diamond, and manufacturing industries. The facility will feature the brand's signature "Great Room", a fitness centre, and two dedicated meeting rooms for business sessions. **Sudeep Jain**, MD, IHG – South Asia, noted that Surat's recent infrastructure upgrades — such as the international airport status — make it a prime target for the midscale segment. This signing further expands IHG's footprint in tier II hubs. ■



IN REMEMBRANCE OF

Param Kannampilly, the architect of India's eco-friendly hospitality

With Param Kannampilly's passing, Indian hospitality loses a guiding force whose understated approach to sustainability and leadership helped shape the country's modern, globally aligned identity.

The passing of Param Kannampilly on 30 March has left the Indian hospitality industry in a reflective mood. He was 75, and had only just marked his birthday days earlier – something several colleagues have pointed out while speaking about how unexpected the loss feels.

For many within the sector, Kannampilly wasn't just another hotelier attached to a successful brand. He was part of a generation that helped define what modern Indian hospitality would eventually become – though at the time, none of it felt particularly modern. It was still being figured out. One of the clearest markers of his influence remains



We lost a legend and a great human being. The hospitality world will remember him as a strong pillar of our foundation. He believed deeply in the segment he helped create. The entire industry will miss him as an outstanding professional.

— KB Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India (HAI)

The Orchid Mumbai. When it opened as India's first ecotel, sustainability wasn't a selling point – it wasn't even widely understood within the industry. And yet, the idea worked. Not loudly, not as a statement, but steadily enough to shift thinking over time. That same approach was carried into Concept Hospitality Pvt Ltd and later The Fern Hotels & Resorts. What stands out, looking back, is that sustainability in his work didn't feel like branding. It felt operational.

Something built into decisions, not layered on top of them.

In the days since his passing, reactions have come in from across the industry – some formal, others more personal, and many sitting somewhere in between.

Farhat Jamal, friend and former colleague, Chairman, Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Committee, IMC, Mumbai said, "He was a rare gentleman whose warmth, humility, and quiet strength touched everyone who knew him". He added that while Kannampilly's professional achievements were significant, it was the grace and sincerity with which he carried himself that people are remembering most now. "His absence," he said, "leaves a deep void in the world of hospitality and in many hearts".

There's a similar thread in what Rahul Chaudhry, Managing Director, CG Corp Global and CC Hospitality, shared. Calling him "a titan – and above all, a great human being", he reflected on a long association with the Kannampilly family and the consistency of his approach. Sustainability, he noted, wasn't something Kannampilly adopted because the industry moved that way – it was something he had already committed to, years earlier.

Some of the most grounded reflections have come from those who knew him longest. PK Mohan

Param Kannampilly was not merely a hotelier, he was a pioneer who demonstrated that sustainability and commercial success can go hand in hand.

— Jimmy Shaw, President, HRAWI

Kumar, Founder and CEO, Turnstone Hospitality LLP, spoke about knowing him for more than five decades, going back to their time at Dadar Catering College. He described him as affable and sensitive, someone who carried ambition without losing his sense of inclusion. In his view, Kannampilly belonged to a phase when the Indian hospitality industry was still taking shape, and helped give it direction that would later align with global expectations.

Industry leaders have also framed his passing in broader terms. KB Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India (HAI) and Chairman, Radisson Hotel Group, South Asia, noted, "We have lost a legend and a great human being. The hospitality world will remember him as a strong pillar of our foundation... an outstanding professional and a true gentleman."

At an institutional level, the Hotel And Restaurant Association

(Western India) (HRAWI) acknowledged his long-standing association with the body and his role in strengthening industry collaboration over the years. Paying tribute, Jimmy Shaw, President, HRAWI, said, "The hospitality industry has lost one of its finest visionaries. Param Kannampilly was not merely a hotelier, he was a pioneer who demonstrated that sustainability and commercial success can go hand in hand. Not just my own mentor, but a mentor and guide to tens of thousands of hospitality professionals who owe their career to him, his contributions to The Fern Hotels & Resorts and the broader hospitality sector have left an indelible mark. On behalf of the Association and the entire hospitality community, I extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, colleagues, and all who had the privilege of knowing him. His legacy will continue to inspire generations to come."

What's noticeable, across all of this, is how often the same word – gentleman – appears. It comes up in formal statements, but also in quieter recollections – not as a flourish, but as something people seem to mean quite literally.

His work changed the way sustainability is understood within Indian hospitality – that part is clear enough. But the more lasting impression, at least for now, seems to be less about what he built and more about how he went about it.

And that's the part people are holding on to.



Industry-ready professionals get the right launchpad

FHRAI is leveraging its massive network to offer students unparalleled placement opportunities and direct access to leading global hotel chains. **AK Singh**, Outgoing Director, outlines FHRAI-IHM's mission to provide elite, industry-backed training for future leaders.



The global hospitality industry isn't just growing; it is fundamentally shifting. Right at the steering wheel of this change is the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI). As the world's second-largest hospitality association, the FHRAI has achieved something genuinely unique: establishing its own elite training ground, the Institute of Hospitality Management (FHRAI-IHM) in Greater Noida.

This isn't just another college project. It is only the second time globally that an industry body has launched such an initiative, and it serves as a direct answer to a massive problem: the gap between dusty textbooks and the high-pressure reality of a five-star hotel floor.

By building FHRAI-IHM, the Federation effectively tackled two big goals at once. On one hand, it creates a reliable pipeline of sharp, technically skilled workers for its thousands of member hotels and restaurants. On the other, it gives young, hungry students a clear shot at the big leagues. We aren't just teaching people how to wait tables; we are grooming the next generation of junior managers and senior supervisors for the world's leading brands.

A seven-acre vision

Since we reopened the operations in 2021, the institute has completed five hard, rewarding years. Our mission is simple: keep getting better every single day. We have invested heavily in a seven-acre campus that feels

To make sure the students are ready for the deep end, they are sent out for 17 weeks of industrial exposure



AK SINGH
Outgoing Director
FHRAI-IHM

like a working hotel, not a classroom. Our students don't just sit behind desks; they work in modern kitchens, high-end bakeries, and real-deal F&B service areas. We even use the same Property Management Software (PMS) that major international chains use at their front desks.

On the academic side, we offer a serious three-year B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration, along with Trade Diplomas for those mastering food production or the art of the bakery.

We are fully affiliated with the National Council for Hotel Management (NCHM), Noida, under the Ministry of Tourism. Our B.Sc. degree carries massive weight, being recognised by the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi.

Building the right attitude

FHRAI-IHM focuses so much on attitude formation. We want students with pleasing personalities and the kind of sharp communication skills

that can handle a crisis with a calm smile. Our faculty includes industry veterans and subject experts who have spent decades dealing with real guests and real problems. These experts share the unvarnished grit of the job, which keeps our students grounded and motivated.

Today, the biggest hotel and restaurant chains come directly to our campus for recruitment. In fact, it is now a common sight to see our students holding two or even three job offers before they've even finished their final exams.

Real industry exposure

In the industry today, there's a real worry that many training programmes are just skin-deep. They churn out graduates with certificates but no real skills, who end up stuck as unskilled labour. To make sure our students are ready for the deep end, we send them out for 17 weeks of industrial exposure in their second year. We also throw them into short-term catering projects and outdoor events.

Technology is disrupting hospitality, so we've made research and innovation a core part of the third year. We want our students to look at the latest tech and management styles so they have a vision for where the industry is going. This mindset is also reflected in our campus culture — through sports, academic contests, and extracurriculars, we build leadership and teamwork.

Innovative holistic growth

Our campus is more than just a place to study; it's a home. With



hostels for 160 boys and 60 girls, our students are immersed in professional hospitality culture twenty-four-seven.

The management, faculty, and staff are all pulling in the same direction. We want to keep upgrading and keep pushing FHRAI-IHM to be the undisputed number-one hospitality institute in Northern India.

For us, it's not just about the last five years; it's about setting the standard for the next fifty. Every competition and every upgraded piece of software is a step toward that goal. ♦♦

Small players feel the LPG heat

The hospitality sector faces a severe viability crisis as repeated commercial LPG price hikes drive operating costs through the roof.



affecting food pricing for consumers, banqueting operations, and tourism-linked services. The broader supply chain connected to the hospitality sector is also feeling the strain. Because of these recent LPG price revisions, a 10 to 15 per cent hike in menu prices is now considered imminent across the board. However, industry leaders fear that even this increase may not be enough to fully absorb the impact of the fuel crisis.

Shetty has called for immediate government intervention to roll back the hike and stabilise prices. He emphasises that the hospitality industry is a key employment generator that is currently facing an existential crisis. Without urgent relief and breathing space, the sector's ability to recover and remain a viable pillar of Western India's economy is in serious jeopardy. The cumulative weight of these fuel hikes has moved the conversation from profit margins to basic survival for thousands of businesses. ♦♦

HRAWI Bureau

The hospitality industry across Western India is currently navigating an unprecedented financial storm. By early April, the sector was already grappling with a sharp rise in operating costs. Factors such as inconsistent operating hours, menu rejigging, and a forced shift to alternative cooking methods cumulatively pushed expenses up by roughly 20 per cent. **Pradeep Shetty**, Vice President, FHRAI and Spokesperson, HRAWI, noted that the price hikes in commercial LPG have added a crushing layer of pressure on already thin margins. Establishments were left with little choice but to plan an upward revision in menu prices just to partially absorb these escalating burdens.

The situation turned catastrophic by May. A massive increase of ₹993 per 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder was implemented, following significant hikes of ₹195.50 in April and ₹144 in March. This means that within just three revisions, the price of fuel has surged to a staggering ₹1,332.50. For an industry where

energy costs represent a major portion of operational expenditure, this escalation is devastating. Businesses are struggling with supply disruptions and weakened cash flows, making the current climate feel nearly insurmountable.

The impact of this surge is disproportionately felt by small and medium-sized establishments. Caterers and businesses dependent on large-scale food production are finding their operations increasingly unsustainable. Many have already been forced to operate with curtailed hours and limited menus. More alarmingly, some establishments have already shut down temporarily, and HRAWI warns that this latest hike will likely accelerate permanent closures and subsequent job losses.

This crisis extends far beyond individual restaurant kitchens. Rising fuel costs ripple through the entire economy,

AD5

Form - IV

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Sd/-
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