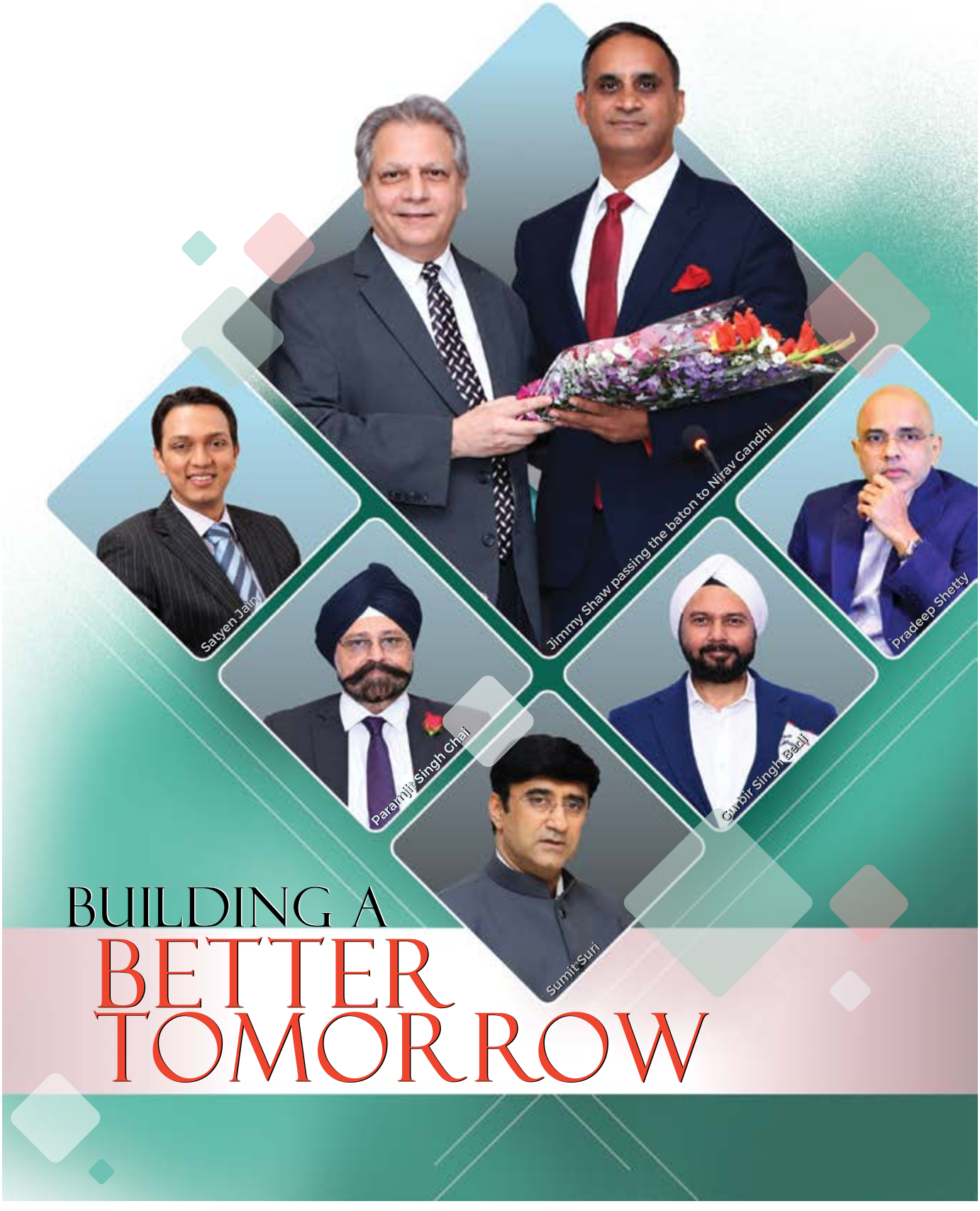
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Dear members,

It is an honour and a privilege to take on the responsibility of serving as President of HRAWI. Having previously served as Senior Vice President, I have had the opportunity to participate closely in industry discussions and represent the interests of our members before Government authorities and regulatory bodies. This experience has reinforced my belief that a strong, united, and informed industry can play a meaningful role in shaping the environment in which hospitality businesses operate.

As we begin this new term, our priorities will be to build upon the efforts of the previous office-bearers. Strengthening Government engagement on Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) and other industry matters will remain central to our agenda. At the same time, we will continue to advance upskilling, food safety, and compliance, recognising that a resilient hospitality sector requires both capable professionals and robust operating standards. Earlier this month, HRAWI hosted another FoSTaC programme in Mumbai, successfully training and certifying forty-seven hospitality professionals.

Knowledge and recognition will also remain important pillars of our work. We intend to expand the reach and frequency of the HRAWI Conclave & Awards for Empowering Hospitality and the Knowledge Series, wherever possible, creating stronger platforms for industry professionals to learn, exchange perspectives, and stay abreast of evolving trends, regulations, and business practices, while also celebrating the achievements and contributions of our sector. We are also proposing the Hotel Chain Representation Board (HCRB) to provide leading hotel chains with a formal platform to engage with HRAWI, share views and challenges, and contribute to policy and regulatory discussions at the State and National levels. This will further strengthen the breadth of industry representation within the Association.

Another area of focus will be taking the HRAWI Expo to a larger scale — creating greater opportunities for industry collaboration, networking, and business. The hospitality industry is evolving rapidly, and HRAWI must evolve alongside it.

Our endeavour will be to strengthen collaboration across hotels, restaurants, and allied businesses, and ensure that the Association remains a constructive, credible, and representative voice for the sector across Western India.

Warm regards,

NIRAV GANDHI
President, HRAWI



A new chapter for our voice

Dear members,

As the festive season approaches, hotels and restaurants across Western India prepare for their busiest months. It is also an opportunity to reflect on what unites us — a shared industry, common aspirations, and a collective responsibility to speak with one voice.

This issue marks a fresh beginning. Under the leadership of our President, Mr Nirav Gandhi, a dedicated Newsletters & Editorial Sub-Committee has been constituted for 2026–27, reinforcing our commitment to meaningful communication and industry engagement.

Our objective is simple — to provide timely information, offer clear guidance on regulatory developments, highlight emerging industry trends, and create a platform that celebrates your achievements.

HRAWI*Now* and our newsletters belong to you. We encourage you to share your news, concerns, experiences, and ideas, helping us build a stronger, more connected hospitality community.

Warm regards,

PARAMJIT SINGH GHAI
Chairman, Newsletters & Editorial Matters
Sub-Committee, HRAWI

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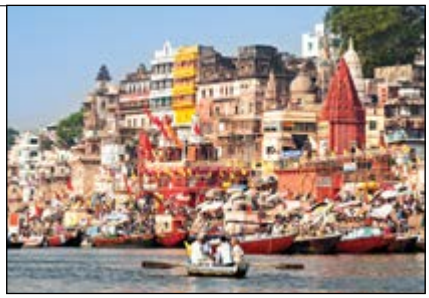
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Madhubhan Resort & Spa integrates solar power, organic farming, energy efficiency, and guest incentives to embed sustainability across its luxury operations.

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Food safety remains fundamental to responsible hospitality, and HRAWI is keeping the conversation moving by bringing professionals together to sharpen their knowledge and everyday practices.

Food safety takes centre stage for training

HRAWI Bureau

The Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI) organised the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) latest Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) programme at Madhubhan Resort & Spa in Anand, Gujarat, on 28 September 2026. The programme brought together 43 hospitality professionals to strengthen their understanding of food safety and its application across everyday operations. **Dr Venkat Pasupathy**, Trainer, Parikshan FSS Pvt Ltd, conducted the session, covering essential areas such as food handling, hygiene, sanitation, and waste management. The programme provided participants with practical insights into strengthening food safety measures and consistently applying industry best practices.

Dr Pasupathy inaugurated the training alongside **Manohar S Gurung**, President, Madhubhan Resort & Spa; **Puneet Saigal**, General Manager; **Chef Rakesh Prasad**, Corporate Director of Culinary; and **Nimit Goswami**, Director of Food and Beverage, Madhubhan Resort & Spa.

HRAWI has trained and certified 4,108 hospitality professionals through FoSTaC and FSSAI training programmes

Raising safety standards

"Food safety is a shared responsibility, and continuous training is one of the most effective ways to strengthen it across the hospitality sector. I extend my gratitude to FSSAI for its continued partnership, and to every participant for their commitment to excellence," says **Nirav Gandhi**, President, HRAWI.

"The latest programme reflects the industry's willingness to invest in stronger standards and responsible food practices. HRAWI will continue to facilitate such programmes across the region and encourage hospitality establishments to make food safety an integral part of their everyday operations," he adds.

The Anand programme forms part of HRAWI's wider effort to develop a stronger food safety culture across hotels and restaurants. Rather than approaching safety purely as a regulatory obligation, the association continues to encourage establishments to integrate responsible practices into routine operations.

"Food safety and hygiene are fundamental to delivering safe and responsible hospitality experiences.

Continuous training plays an important role in ensuring that our teams remain updated, aware, and consistent in following the highest standards of food safety in daily operations," says **Manohar S Gurung**, President, Madhubhan Resort & Spa.

"We are fortunate to host this FoSTaC training programme at Madhubhan Resort & Spa with the help and support of HRAWI and FSSAI, led by none other than the renowned expert, Dr Venkat Pasupathy," he adds.

A culture of food safety

Gurung also highlights the wider value of such training for hospitality professionals. "Such initiatives not only enhance professional knowledge but also reinforce our collective responsibility towards the health, safety, and trust of our guests and society at large," he says.

He further emphasises that food safety must become an institutional culture that organisations actively cultivate and nurture — an approach that can support long-term operational excellence and strengthen consumer trust. This commitment requires consistent efforts across all levels of an organisation. Gurung also draws attention to the importance of continuous professional development, citing Henry Ford's words, "Anyone who keeps learning stays young." The sentiment reflects an industry where teams must continually adapt to evolving standards, regulations, and guest expectations.

Skills behind safety

HRAWI has so far trained and certified 4,108 hospitality professionals through its FoSTaC initiatives and FSSAI's Management Training Programme. Through these programmes, the association aims to equip professionals with the knowledge and practical skills required to uphold high food safety standards.

The latest Anand programme extends this commitment — bringing food safety from regulation into everyday practice while reinforcing training, accountability, and continuous learning across hospitality operations.



The Anand programme equipped 43 hospitality professionals with practical knowledge on hygiene, sanitation, and safety



HRAWI members at the 76th Annual General Meeting held at Trident, Nariman Point, Mumbai, on 10 September 2026

HRAWI's 76th AGM resets the leadership compass

With **Nirav Gandhi** at the helm, HRAWI begins its new term sharpening advocacy, widening representation, and creating stronger platforms for hospitality's evolving business landscape.

HRAWI Bureau

A change at the helm often comes with promises of continuity. At HRAWI's 76th Annual General Meeting, however, the transition also brought a clearly defined agenda for what comes next.

Held at Trident, Nariman Point, Mumbai, on 10 September 2026, the AGM saw **Nirav Gandhi**, Director, Express Group of Hotels, Vadodara, Gujarat, elected President of the Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) (HRAWI) for 2026–27.

For Gandhi, the presidency follows years spent within the Association and at the intersection of hospitality operations, policy, and regulation. Before his election, he served as HRAWI's Senior Vice President and, earlier, as Hon. Secretary. He has also served as an Executive Committee Member of FHRAI and as founder & past president of EO Gujarat.

His hospitality career spans more than three decades. A graduate in Hotel & Resort Management from

The new agenda places stronger government engagement and industry collaboration firmly at HRAWI's core

Rochester Institute of Technology, USA, Gandhi has served as Director of Express Hotel, Vadodara, for over two decades.

"It is an honour and a responsibility to take on the leadership of HRAWI at a time when the hospitality industry is undergoing significant transformation," says Gandhi. "The Association has built a strong legacy of advocacy, collaboration, and service to the industry, and I look forward to building on that foundation."

Driving policy change

That foundation is particularly relevant to Gandhi's priorities for the coming term. Strengthening Government engagement on Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) and other industry matters sits prominently on the agenda.

It is also familiar territory for the new President. Gandhi has represented hospitality interests before Government authorities and regulatory bodies on taxation, licensing, hotel classification, OTA-related matters, Quality Council of India requirements, and Bureau of Indian Standards norms.

He also supported the development of IHQS — FHRAI's hotel classification system. "I believe that a strong and united industry voice is essential to shaping policies that enable hospitality businesses to thrive," he says.

HRAWI has established a new Hotel Chain Representation Board (HCRB), creating a formal platform for leading hotel chains to engage with the Association. The intention goes beyond adding another industry forum. The proposed Board would allow chains to share challenges and perspectives and contribute to policy and regulatory discussions at State and National levels, widening the breadth of representation within HRAWI.

"Together with our Office Bearers, Executive Committee, and members, we will work towards making hospitality more resilient and competitive," Gandhi adds.

Gandhi's priorities reflect an Association seeking to strengthen its policy voice while expanding participation, knowledge, recognition, and business opportunities.



Beyond the boardroom

Representation is only one part of the mandate. HRAWI also plans to strengthen the platforms through which its members learn, connect, gain recognition, and conduct business.

The Association intends to expand the reach and frequency of the HRAWI Conclave & Awards For Empowering Hospitality and the Knowledge Series, wherever possible. The objective is to give industry professionals greater opportunities to exchange perspectives and keep pace with evolving trends, regulations, and business practices, while celebrating achievements across hospitality.

Business engagement is also getting a larger canvas. HRAWI plans to scale up the HRAWI Expo, with the aim of creating greater opportunities for collaboration, networking, and commerce across the hospitality ecosystem. "The hospitality industry is evolving rapidly and HRAWI must evolve alongside it," says Gandhi.

He will be joined in the 2026–27 term by **Paramjit Singh Ghai**, Senior Vice President; **Gurbir Singh Bedi**, Vice President; **Pradeep Shetty**, Honorary Secretary; **Sumit Suri**, Joint Honorary Secretary; and **Satyen Jain**, Honorary Treasurer.

The composition of the new leadership may have been decided at the AGM, but the more consequential story will unfold after it. Gandhi's priorities point towards an Association seeking to sharpen its policy voice while opening more avenues for participation, knowledge, recognition, and business.

For HRAWI, entering its 76th year therefore becomes more than a milestone. It offers an opportunity to recalibrate how the Association represents a hospitality industry that is itself changing quickly. And for its new President, the task is clear — carry forward an established legacy while ensuring HRAWI keeps pace with the industry it speaks for.

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- RESTAURANT MEMBERS
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Green Hotel of the Year — Mid-market
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Green Hotel of the Year — Luxury
Madhuban Resort & Spa Anand, Gujarat



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Augustine Anthony Vallapil, Hotel Manager
Ginger Andheri



Hotel Revenue Manager of the Year – Male
Ayush Kapoor, Director of Revenue
IHCL, Goa



Resort General Manager of the Year
Suvendu Pal Chowdhury, General Manager
Whispering Palms Beach Resort, Goa



Hotel Front Office Manager of the Year — Luxury – Female
Deeksha Dandona, Front Office Manager
IHCL, Goa



Hotel Manager of the Year — Economy – Female
Naomi Gajjar, Hotel Manager – Special Projects
Ginger Candolim



***Hotel Front Office Manager of the Year — Economy – Female**, Nikita Gaikwad, Front Office Manager*
Ginger Hotel Andheri East



Restaurant Entrepreneur of the Year – Female
Sonal Barmecha, Founder
Sante Spa Cuisine, Mumbai



Hotel Revenue Manager of the Year – Female
Prateekha Kundu, Cluster Revenue Manager
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Radisson Blu Indore



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Hotel F&B Manager of the Year — Economy – Male
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Ginger Goa Candolim



Hotel general Manager of the Year — Luxury – Male
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Taj Cidade De Goa



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An appreciation award presented to the students of various Institutes of Hotel Management (IHMs)



(L-R) Dr Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar of Udaipur, Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and Garish Oberoi

The art of hospitality meets heritage

The 56th FHRAI Convention in Varanasi united hospitality leaders, sparked conversations on tourism's future, and celebrated excellence, with Western India's industry achievements earning recognition.

HRAWI Bureau

The historic city of Varanasi became the centre of India's hospitality discourse as the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) hosted its 56th Annual Convention at Taj Ganges. Bringing together 1,400 delegates from 22 states, alongside international representatives, the three-day gathering combined policy dialogue, business discussions, cultural experiences, and industry recognition. Themed Ananta Kashi: Leading the Future of Tourism through Spirit, Culture, Cuisine, and Craft, the convention placed India's cultural identity at the heart of its tourism ambitions. Against Varanasi's spiritual backdrop, industry leaders explored how heritage, technology, infrastructure, and innovation could collectively shape the next phase of hospitality growth.

The Varanasi convention united 1,400 hospitality delegates, strengthening industry dialogue on innovation, investment, and tourism

Charting next chapter

The inaugural ceremony brought together **Satish Mahana**, Speaker, Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly; **Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo**, Deputy Chief Minister, Odisha; **Rohan Khaunte**, Tourism Minister, Goa; and international diplomatic representatives. Senior hospitality executives, including leaders from Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, Radisson

Hotel Group, and IHCL, contributed industry perspectives.

Emphasising the country's longstanding hospitality traditions, Mahana remarked, "Hospitality is deeply rooted in Indian culture and reflected in the traditional principle of 'Atithi Devo Bhava'."His observations reinforced the importance of preserving India's service ethos while strengthening its global tourism positioning. The convention's significance extended beyond ceremonial proceedings.

Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & CEO, IHCL, delivered a keynote address, while a leadership panel featuring representatives from Radisson, Wyndham, IHG, Hilton, and Sterling Holiday Resorts explored brand strategy, equity, and future-proofing. Khaunte highlighted the historical and spiritual connection between Goa and Varanasi, describing Goa's identity as Dakshin Kashi. Similarly, **Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar of Udaipur**, Patron of the convention, drew attention to the historical relationship between Mewar and Kashi. His reflections on heritage tourism and destination weddings illustrated how cultural assets can create contemporary hospitality experiences.

Towards industry progress

A significant aspect of the convention was its emphasis on collaboration between government, industry associations, and hospitality businesses. **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, FHRAI, stated, "By bridging heritage and innovation, this conference will serve as a pivotal platform for the future of India's tourism and hospitality sectors."

International participation further strengthened the convention's significance. Representatives from Laos, Thailand, and Sri Lanka highlighted the potential of cultural and spiritual connections to encourage cross-border tourism. Beyond the conference halls, delegates experienced Varanasi's cultural traditions through musical performances, spiritual visits, and the Ganga Aarti.

Celebrating achievements

The FHRAI Hospitality Awards provided a platform to acknowledge professional achievement, service excellence, and dedication across the sector.

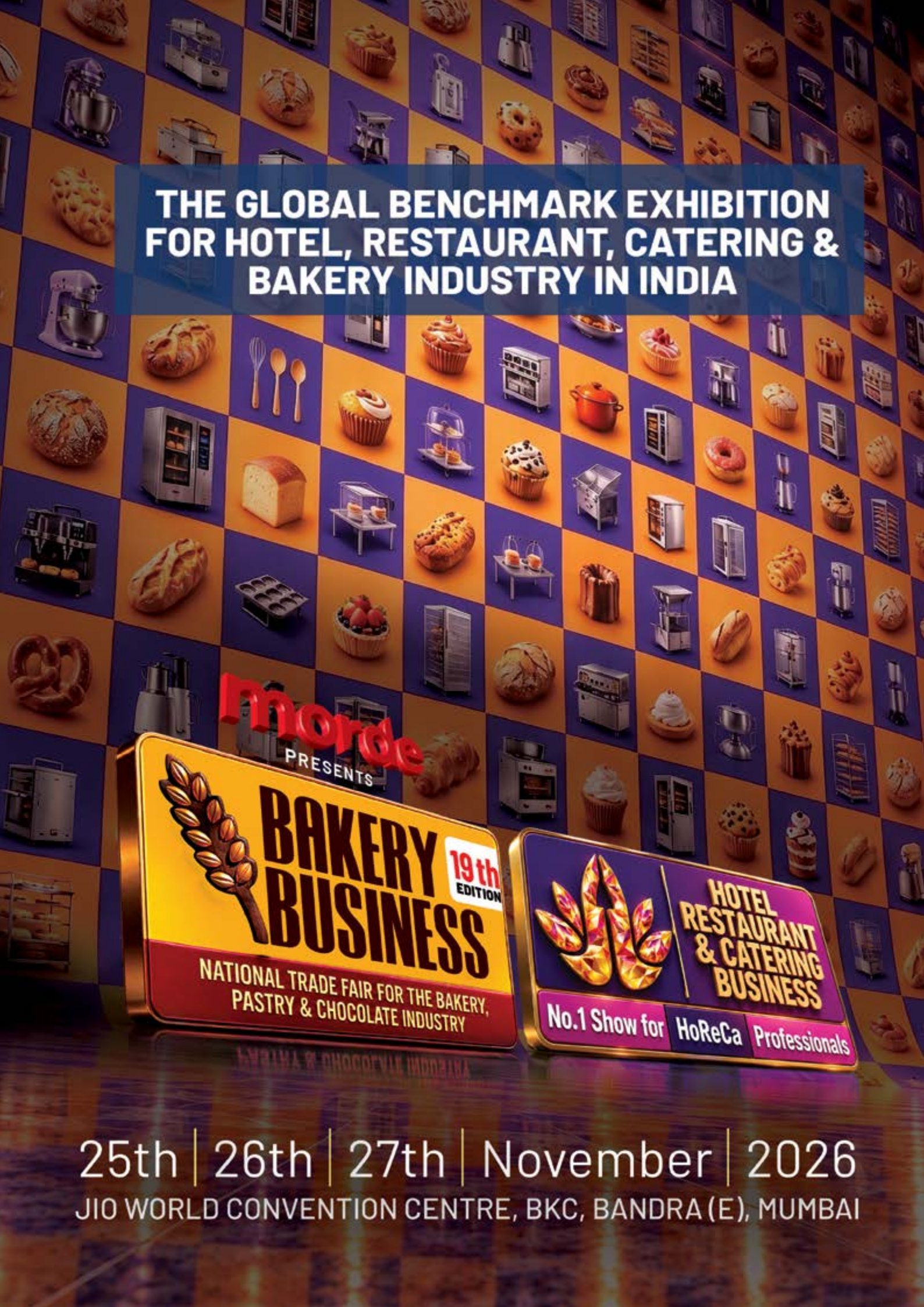
The achievements celebrated at the convention highlighted the importance of quality, innovation, and consistent service standards. Such recognition carries significance beyond individual accolades. It encourages professional development, inspires emerging talent, and reinforces the value of excellence across hospitality operations.



As the curtains fell on the Varanasi convention, its message extended beyond discussions and deliberations. Hospitality's future rests not only on infrastructure, investment, and innovation, but also on the people whose commitment brings these ambitions to life.



(L-R) Tarun Tanwar, Dr Mohd Nadeem, Er SS Beniwal, MA Matin, and Rohit Tiwari


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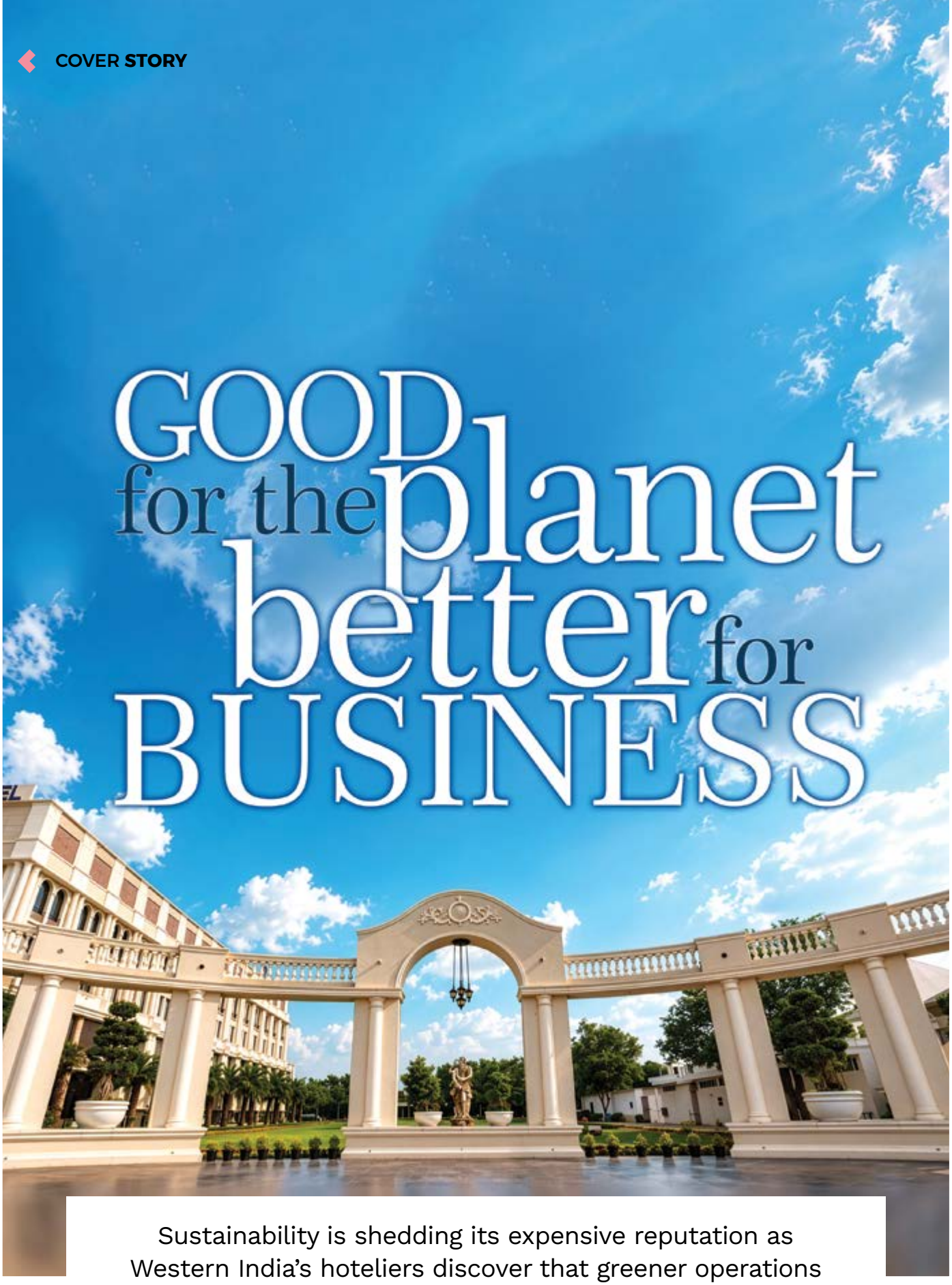
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Sustainability is shedding its expensive reputation as Western India's hoteliers discover that greener operations can protect profits, attract corporate business, and strengthen long-term competitiveness.

Mansi Chauhan

The hospitality industry's relationship with sustainability is undergoing a significant transformation. What was once associated primarily with environmental responsibility, corporate commitments, and expensive green certifications is increasingly being examined through a more commercially relevant lens — profitability.

For hotels navigating rising operating expenses, competitive room rates, resource constraints, and evolving guest expectations, the question is no longer simply whether sustainability is desirable. It is whether going green can actually improve the bottom line.

Across Western India, this question carries particular significance. Maharashtra's established hospitality markets, Gujarat's expanding corporate and wedding economy, and the emerging hotel landscape of Madhya Pradesh present different operating realities. A luxury property in Mumbai may have the resources to invest in renewable energy and sophisticated building-management systems, while an independent hotel in Indore or a banquet venue in Ahmedabad must scrutinise every rupee of capital expenditure.

Yet, despite these differences, an increasingly persuasive argument is emerging: sustainability need not be a financial burden. When approached strategically, it can reduce recurring expenditure, improve asset efficiency, strengthen corporate relationships, and create a competitive advantage.

The real challenge lies in distinguishing investments that deliver measurable returns from initiatives that look impressive on paper but struggle to justify their cost.

The green bottom line

For hotel owners, the strongest sustainability argument begins not with environmental credentials but with operational efficiency. Electricity, water, fuel, food, and consumables represent recurring expenses that directly influence profitability. Reducing unnecessary consumption can therefore improve margins without requiring higher room rates or additional business.



SATYEN JAIN
Honorary Treasurer, **HRAWI**
CEO & Director, **Pride Hotels Group**

"Sustainability must deliver measurable efficiency, reduce operating costs, and create lasting value throughout a hotel's lifecycle."

Satyen Jain, Honorary Treasurer, HRAWI, and CEO & Director, Pride Hotels Group, believes that sustainability investments must be evaluated through their economic contribution over the lifetime of an asset. He explains that Pride has progressively invested in wind and solar energy, LED lighting, water recycling, composting, and energy-efficient systems. Investments in efficient air-conditioning at certain properties have also delivered significant savings.

The important distinction, Jain suggests, is between the purchase price of an intervention and its total cost of ownership. Equipment that initially appears expensive may ultimately prove economical when reduced energy consumption, maintenance expenditure, and long-term asset benefits are considered.

This changes the investment conversation. Instead of treating sustainability as an isolated corporate social responsibility initiative, hotels can incorporate it into capital budgeting, asset management, and operational planning.

For independent operators, however, financial discipline remains essential. A renewable-energy project may offer attractive lifetime savings, but its feasibility depends on available capital, financing costs, property ownership, electricity tariffs, and the consistency of demand. Consequently, the most effective sustainability strategy is rarely the most ambitious one. It is the one that addresses a property's largest inefficiencies first.

Small steps, big savings

Sumit Suri, Joint Honorary Secretary & Area Nominee – Madhya Pradesh, HRAWI, and Director, Hotel Omni Palace, argues that independent and mid-sized properties do not necessarily require elaborate sustainability programmes to achieve meaningful results.

Optimising air-conditioning temperatures, maintaining HVAC equipment, installing LED lighting, repairing water leaks, and improving laundry practices can reduce recurring expenditure without substantial capital investment.

Procurement offers another opportunity. Reducing unnecessary packaging, selecting durable products, monitoring consumption, and sourcing locally where commercially practical can lower costs while improving resource efficiency.

Suri places particular emphasis on measurement. Hotels that do not monitor their electricity, water, fuel, and food consumption often lack the information necessary to identify inefficiencies. Basic submeters, monthly consumption records, and preventive-maintenance schedules can establish the foundation for more informed investment decisions.

This is particularly relevant to smaller properties, where even modest savings can have a meaningful impact on operating performance.

Rather than pursuing expensive certifications immediately, operators can establish consumption baselines, identify their largest cost centres, and implement improvements in phases. Savings from initial interventions can subsequently help finance more ambitious projects. The approach also challenges a persistent misconception — that meaningful sustainability requires a large hotel, an international brand, or a substantial capital budget. In reality, operational discipline may be as important as technological sophistication.

Small hotels, big ideas

One of the industry's most important developments is the growing recognition that sustainability is not exclusively the domain of large hospitality chains. Jain cites Pride Elite Phaltan as an example of how a relatively small property can implement meaningful environmental interventions. The LEED-certified hotel uses solar energy and energy-efficient systems, alongside a biowaste plant that converts food waste into gas for cooking.

This example demonstrates that scale alone does not determine whether a sustainability investment is viable. Access to technical expertise, suitable financing, and appropriate technology can be equally influential. Nevertheless, structural barriers remain. Independent operators often face higher borrowing costs, limited technical support, and uncertainty about investment returns. Retrofitting an operational hotel presents additional complications. Replacing kitchen equipment or upgrading cooling systems may require temporary closures, making lost business an important component of the investment calculation.

For leased properties, the economics become even more complicated. Operators may hesitate to finance improvements when the resulting asset benefits ultimately remain with landlords. This is where industry associations, financial institutions, and government support can help bridge the gap between environmental ambition and commercial feasibility.

The cost of excess

Nowhere is the relationship between sustainability and profitability more immediate than in hotel kitchens and banquet operations.



According to the United Nations Environment Programme's Food Waste Index Report 2024, approximately 1.05 billion tonnes of food were wasted globally in 2022. Food-service establishments accounted for 290 million tonnes — an indication of the scale of the challenge facing commercial food operations.

For India's hospitality sector, the issue becomes particularly relevant during weddings, conferences, and large social gatherings, where elaborate menus and expectations of abundance can encourage excessive preparation.

Narendra Somani, Executive Committee Member & Area

Sustainability investments are increasingly proving their commercial worth through lower operating costs, improved efficiency, and resilience





SUMIT SURI
Joint Honorary Secy & Area Nominee – MP, **HRAWI**
Director, **Hotel Omni Palace**

"Sometimes sustainability begins with a meter, a maintenance schedule, and an informed team rather than technology."



Nominee – Gujarat, HRAWI, and Managing Director, The Grand Bhagwati identifies food waste as one of the clearest opportunities to improve event profitability. He estimates that food costs typically represent 22–28 per cent of revenue in hotel and banquet operations, while 4–10 per cent of purchased food may be wasted. These are industry estimates cited by Somani rather than independently verified national averages.

The potential financial implications are significant. Reducing waste means purchasing fewer ingredients, lowering preparation costs, reducing disposal requirements, and improving kitchen productivity. Somani recommends confirming guest numbers 48–72 hours before events, using historical consumption data to forecast requirements, and introducing staggered buffet replenishment.

Smaller serving vessels, live counters, and carefully engineered menus can further reduce waste without compromising presentation. His assessment suggests that systematic food-waste interventions can improve food-cost margins by 2–4 percentage points in suitable operations, although actual outcomes depend on the property's existing waste levels and implementation.

Importantly, the approach need not undermine the experience of generosity associated with Indian hospitality. A carefully curated buffet featuring fresh, well-executed dishes can communicate luxury more effectively than an extensive selection that ultimately goes uneaten. Surplus food redistribution, subject to



food-safety requirements, and the composting or processing of unavoidable waste can strengthen the operational model further. For banquet-intensive hotels, the commercial opportunity is therefore substantial — sustainability can improve both resource efficiency and the quality of event execution.

Green means business

Beyond reducing operating costs, sustainability is increasingly influencing hotel procurement decisions. Jain observes that corporate clients are seeking measurable environmental performance, including certifications, energy efficiency, water management, and responsible sourcing.

Somani highlights similar trends in Gujarat's meetings and events sector, where multinational companies increasingly include sustainability requirements in requests for proposals.

For hotels in Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, and GIFT City, credible environmental credentials could strengthen their appeal to corporate clients. However, green certifications do not necessarily command higher room rates — their value lies in securing business and meeting procurement expectations. Emerging destinations such as Indore must also consider sustainable transport, waste management, and responsible event infrastructure.

As environmental accountability becomes integral to corporate decision-making, the hotels demonstrating measurable progress could gain a competitive edge. Sustainability is thus evolving beyond individual properties into a broader destination-level strategy, influencing how hotels attract business, build partnerships, and position themselves for future growth.

Beyond the greenwash

As corporate expectations evolve, hotels face growing pressure to substantiate sustainability claims with credible data. The World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance's Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative provides a free methodology to calculate emissions from hotel stays and meetings, alongside frameworks for measuring water consumption and waste.

Tools like these help the independent properties demonstrate environmental performance without substantial reporting investments.

Tracking electricity consumption per occupied room, water usage, and food waste per guest enables hotels to identify inefficiencies and measure improvements. Certifications such as LEED, IGBC, GRIHA, Green Key, and EarthCheck can strengthen market positioning, but credentials alone cannot replace measurable results. With corporate procurement teams increasingly scrutinising environmental performance, reliable reporting could become a competitive advantage. Hotels demonstrating consistent reductions in resource consumption may

Smaller hotels can unlock meaningful savings through smarter energy management, water conservation, procurement, and operational discipline



NARENDRA SOMANI
EC Member & Area Nominee – Gujarat, **HRAWI**
Managing Director, **The Grand Bhagwati**

"Reducing food waste protects resources and creates opportunities for more responsible, premium event experiences."

be better positioned to secure corporate accounts, strengthen client confidence, and differentiate themselves from competitors relying on broad green claims rather than verified operational achievements and transparent environmental reporting practices.

Built green, built smart

For new hotels, sustainability begins at the planning stage. Suri believes emerging markets can benefit from integrating energy-efficient systems, natural ventilation, rainwater harvesting, and solar readiness into building designs, avoiding costly retrofits. According to India's Bureau of Energy Efficiency, ECBC-compliant buildings can achieve 20 per cent energy savings, rising to 40–45 per cent under SuperECBC benchmarks. For developers in tier-II and tier-III cities, balancing initial investment with long-term operational savings could significantly improve asset economics and long-term profitability.



Environmental performance is emerging as a competitive differentiator as corporate buyers increasingly demand credible sustainability credentials



The green payback

Despite growing commercial interest, sustainability investments cannot be evaluated through a universal formula. Somani identifies relatively straightforward interventions — efficient lighting, kitchen equipment, water-saving fixtures, and basic waste-management practices — as measures that can offer comparatively short payback periods. He estimates that suitable projects may recover investment within one to three years, while renewable-energy installations and certain heating technologies may require three to six years, depending on property-specific conditions.

More capital-intensive systems, including battery storage, wastewater treatment, and standalone waste-processing infrastructure, can be harder to justify through direct savings alone. Financing arrangements, property ownership, utilisation patterns, and maintenance requirements ultimately determine viability. For the industry, this reinforces the importance of practical sustainability roadmaps rather than uniform investment prescriptions. The commercial argument is becoming clearer, but success depends on disciplined execution.

Hotels must measure consumption, prioritise opportunities, evaluate lifecycle costs, train employees, and monitor results. Policymakers and industry bodies, meanwhile, can accelerate adoption through accessible financing, credible technical guidance, and shared infrastructure. The opportunity extends beyond reducing utility bills. Efficient hotels may become more resilient to rising resource costs, better positioned for corporate procurement, and more attractive as long-term assets.

For Western India's hospitality industry, sustainability is increasingly about protecting the economics of tomorrow's business. Going green may not guarantee higher profits, but ignoring resource efficiency could eventually prove considerably more expensive.

Hotels are embracing AI faster than ever, but technology alone is not transforming hospitality. The real challenge lies in turning experimentation into measurable commercial advantage.

Making AI work for hotel operations

HRAWI Bureau

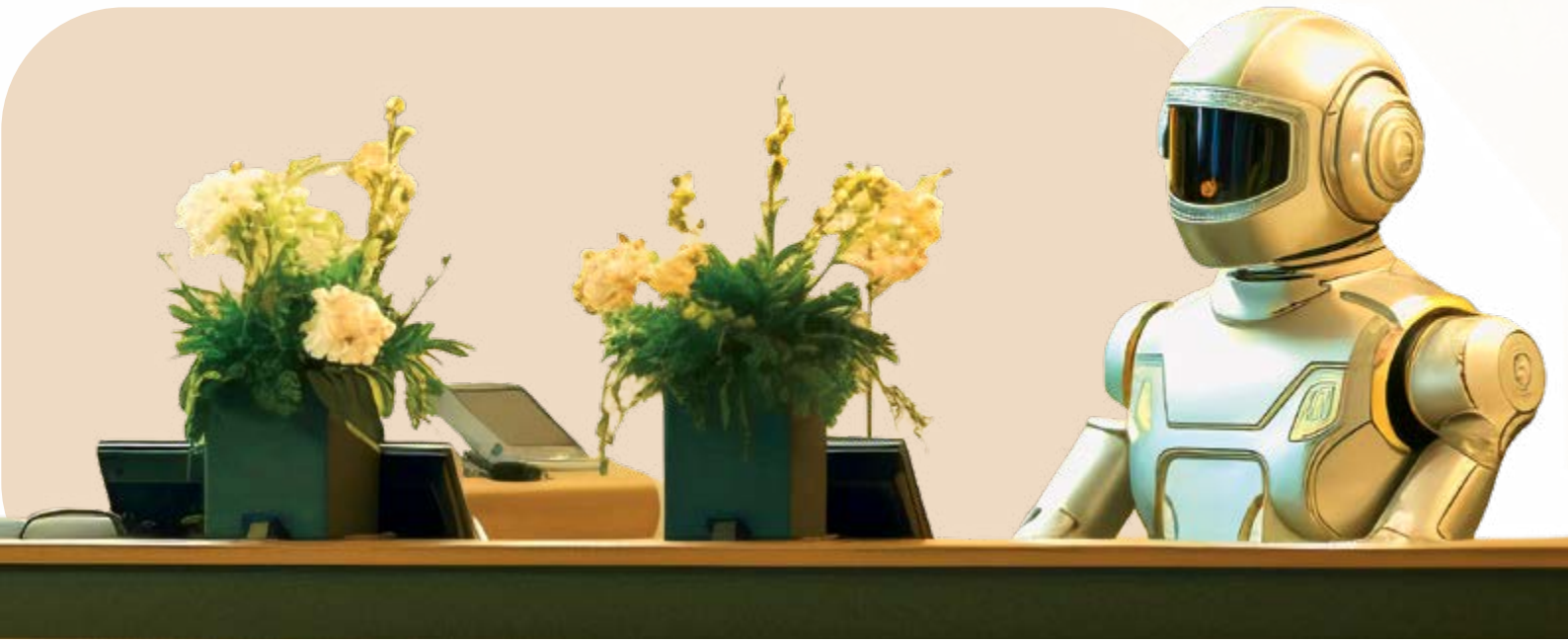
For an industry built around saving guests time, hotels are still spending an extraordinary amount of their own.

More than 80 per cent of hotel commercial teams spend one to two days every week manually producing and analysing reports. Fewer than 30 per cent have invested in dedicated reporting tools. And this is happening just as artificial intelligence is being heralded as hospitality's next great productivity leap. That contradiction runs through The State of Distribution 2026, developed by RateGain, NYU SPS Jonathan M Tisch Center of Hospitality, and HEDNA. Based on more than 270 hotel brands and 58,000 properties across 53 countries, the study finds that over half of hotels already use or are procuring generative AI. Yet fewer than one in 10 report reductions in manual work exceeding 30 per cent. So, where is the promised efficiency?

AI meets its limits

The answer may lie beneath the AI layer itself. Hotel commercial operations have accumulated property systems, revenue tools, distribution platforms, marketing





technology, and multiple vendors. When the data sitting across them remains fragmented, adding AI does not magically connect the dots.

Hotels appear to be recognising this. Technology budgets are rising, but investment priorities are shifting towards improving existing systems, increasing productivity, and reducing integration and vendor complexity rather than simply buying more platforms.

There is also a trust barrier. Hotels are increasingly willing to let AI assist employees, but remain cautious about allowing it to act autonomously. Data privacy, governance, and accountability become considerably more important when an algorithm moves from recommending an action to taking one.

Over 80 per cent of hotel commercial teams spend one to two days a week producing and analysing reports

Interestingly, mid-sized chains may be better positioned to bridge that divide. The study found stronger cross-functional alignment, greater reporting automation, more mature AI governance, and the highest incidence of meaningful AI-led reductions in manual work among this segment. They appear to occupy a useful middle ground — enough scale to invest, without some of the organisational silos and integration complexity of larger groups.

Discovery gets smarter

The urgency is not only operational. AI is beginning to reshape the other side of the hotel transaction: how guests find and choose where to stay.

SiteMinder's research among 12,000 travellers across 14 countries found that AI as the starting point for hotel research has climbed from 1 to 4 per cent in a year. More tellingly, 80 per cent now want AI-powered capabilities somewhere in their booking journey, with price monitoring and alerts the most requested at 44 per cent. Yet hotel distribution strategies are moving more slowly. AI-originated searches are already generating a measurable share of reservations,

Over 50% of hotels use or procure generative AI, yet fewer than 10% report significant impact

while 55 per cent of hotels report no or only minor changes to their distribution strategy. Meanwhile, despite near-universal direct-booking infrastructure, OTAs still generate close to twice as many bookings as hotel-owned digital channels.

That makes AI more than an efficiency conversation. It is becoming a question of visibility, distribution, revenue, and competitiveness.

The next phase, therefore, is unlikely to be about who acquires the most sophisticated AI. Hotels first need connected data, cleaner workflows, sensible governance, and clarity about which problems actually need automating.

AI has already checked into hospitality. The competitive question now is whether hotels can put it to work before their guests move even further ahead.

Hospitality careers reward grit and growth



KB Kachru, Chairman – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, and President, Hotel Association of India, has highlighted the career opportunities emerging across hospitality despite the sector's demanding nature. Speaking at the 41st Convocation of the International Institute of Culinary Arts in Delhi, he said character, attitude, and consistency remain critical to building successful hospitality careers.

Kachru urged graduates to prioritise knowledge, skills, and experience over titles or glamour, noting that consistent performance under pressure drives professional advancement. He also pointed to future employment potential as the country moves towards a projected requirement of one million hotel rooms by 2030. The convocation included diploma presentations, industry addresses, awards, and discussions on professional challenges facing the next generation of culinary talent. ■

Regenta maps its next growth phase



Royal Orchid Hotels Limited (ROHL) is positioning Z by Regenta as a major growth engine under its Vision 2030 strategy, as it scales its managed and franchised portfolio. Executive Director Keshav Baljee said the brand will target smaller, full-service neighbourhood hotels, typically offering 30–60 rooms.

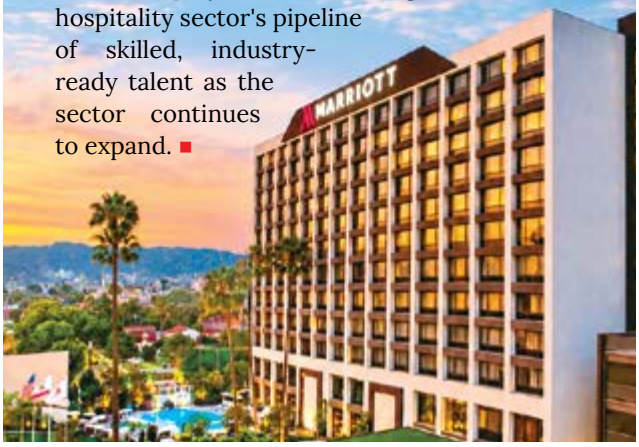
ROHL currently operates around 125 hotels, with another 50 projects under development, and aims to expand its overall portfolio to approximately 350 properties by 2030. The company is strengthening technology, processes, manpower, sales and marketing, and operational systems to support this expansion.

Z by Regenta's franchise-friendly model is designed to give independent hotel owners access to established systems and standards — while allowing ROHL to expand efficiently without compromising service quality, guest experience, or brand integrity. ■

Marriott opens new doors for youth

Marriott International has launched Project Prarambh, creating hospitality career pathways for young people from vulnerable communities across India. Developed with The Job Plus and the Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC), the initiative will provide industry-relevant training, workplace exposure, mentorship, and certification.

Targeting participants aged 18–30, the programme aims to train 500 young people over the next two tothree years through a network of training partners. The Job Plus will identify and prepare candidates, while THSC will provide industry-aligned training, assessment, and certification. Guided by Marriott's Serve 360 sustainability and social impact framework, Project Prarambh seeks to improve workplace readiness, support access to formal employment, and strengthen hospitality sector's pipeline of skilled, industry-ready talent as the sector continues to expand. ■



IHG, Air India link loyalty rewards



IHG Hotels & Resorts and Air India have partnered to connect IHG One Rewards with the airline's Maharaja Club, expanding earning and redemption opportunities for travellers. Maharaja Club members can now earn two Maharaja Points for every US$1 spent at most IHG hotels worldwide, while selected extended-stay brands offer one point per US$ 1.

IHG One Rewards members can also convert 1,000 points into 200 Maharaja Points, with 1,000 points set as the minimum exchange threshold. The partnership connects IHG's portfolio of more than 7,100 hotels across over 100 countries with Air India's network spanning India and five continents. As a launch offer, registered Maharaja Club members can earn triple points on qualifying IHG stays from 15 September–31 December, with no blackout dates. ■



Local culture drives new travel trends

Experiential travel is transforming India's hospitality sector as travellers increasingly prioritise local culture, cuisine, craftsmanship, and community engagement over conventional accommodation. According to Skyscanner's India Culture Travel Index 2026, 67 per cent of Indian travellers plan holidays around cultural experiences. **Charulata Sukhija**, Deputy Secretary General, Hotel Association of India (HAI), highlighted the growing importance of destination-led hospitality — where hotels facilitate authentic experiences through local partnerships. An initiative involving the Ministry of Tourism and MakeMyTrip has brought over 350 guided experiences across more than 60 Indian cities onto digital platforms. Community-led experiences offer opportunities to strengthen local economies, promote sustainable tourism, and redefine hospitality beyond accommodation. ■

Novotel takes weddings beyond the ballroom

Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach is reshaping its wedding proposition as couples increasingly seek multi-day celebrations built around experiences, personalisation, and destination-style hospitality. The beachfront hotel is combining accommodation, dining, wellness, entertainment, and curated guest experiences to extend celebrations beyond the main wedding ceremony.

With more than 200 rooms, beachfront lawns, the Champagne Ballroom, ocean-facing terraces, and dedicated spaces for traditional baraat processions, the property can accommodate residential weddings under one roof. Bespoke menus spanning Indian, regional, Pan-Asian, and international cuisines further support customised celebrations. Technology is also being integrated through digital planning tools, collaborative timelines, and real-time coordination. Alongside this, conscious sourcing, seasonal ingredients, and food-waste reduction are becoming increasingly important as Novotel responds to evolving expectations around modern wedding hospitality. ■





Hilton puts F&B talent front and centre

Hilton South Asia hosted the inaugural Academy of F&B Artists at Conrad Pune from 3–5 September 2026, bringing together culinary talent, F&B professionals, hospitality leaders, and industry voices from across the region. Built around the pillars of 'Connect. Inspire. Recognise.', the three-day platform combined conversations, learning, networking, and recognition, with discussions exploring the future of hotel food and beverage.

The programme culminated in the inaugural Academy Awards, celebrating individuals and teams across Hilton's South Asia portfolio for culinary craft, creativity, leadership, consistency, and guest experience. The initiative also created opportunities for professionals to exchange ideas on evolving dining expectations and commercial performance. Through the Academy, Hilton aims to strengthen collaboration, recognise talent, and support the continued evolution of food and beverage across its regional hotels. ■

Taj brings São Paulo to Mumbai

IHCL's Taj InnerCircle Series made its debut at Loya, The Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai, with an exclusive cocktail experience featuring São Paulo's acclaimed Exímia bar. The collaboration brought contemporary Brazilian cocktail culture together with Loya's culinary interpretation of India's Great North.

Led by Márcio Silva, ranked No. 29 in The Bar World 100 2026, the evening offered Taj InnerCircle members signature cocktails, omakase-style tastings, and an interactive exploration of Exímia's craft. The São Paulo bar ranks No. 61 on The World's 50 Best Bars 2025. The event marked the first chapter of the Taj InnerCircle Series — an initiative designed to extend member engagement beyond conventional hotel stays through curated experiences spanning food, art, performance, books, jewellery, and culture. ■





Radisson adds two hotels in Gujarat

Radisson Hotel Group has expanded its Gujarat portfolio with Radisson Resort & Spa Sasan Gir and Park Inn & Suites by Radisson Rajkot, opened in partnership with NILE Hospitality. The additions take the partners' portfolio in the state to five hotels across Kandla, Gandhinagar, Navsari, Sasan Gir, and Rajkot.

The 122-room Sasan Gir resort, located near Gir National Park and overlooking Madhuvanti Dam, targets wildlife, leisure, wedding, and experiential travel. It also offers more than 164,250 sq ft of indoor and outdoor event space. Meanwhile, the 54-room Rajkot property marks the brand's debut in the city, serving business, leisure, meetings, and social demand. The openings underline Radisson's strategy of expanding across emerging leisure destinations and Tier II and Tier III commercial markets. ■

Lords elevates Goa with wellness retreat



Lords Hotels & Resorts is set to expand its Goa portfolio with Lords Aloha Wellness Resort, an upcoming luxury retreat in Arambol, North Goa. Designed around wellness, leisure, and nature, the resort will feature 32 rooms and suites catering to couples, families, and leisure travellers.

Facilities will include a swimming pool, outdoor community jacuzzi, spa, gym, poolside café, restaurant, and bar. A conference hall will also cater to corporate meetings, offsites, retreats, and intimate gatherings. Positioned as a tranquil alternative to Goa's busier tourism hubs, the property aims to offer guests space, privacy, and opportunities to unwind in a serene setting.

The development strengthens Lords Hotels & Resorts' presence in the state while tapping growing demand for wellness-led and experiential stays in North Goa. ■



Pride Plaza marks milestone in Indore

Pride Hotels & Resorts has opened Pride Plaza Indore, marking its 40th operational hotel and the Pride Plaza brand's debut in the city. Located on AB Bypass near Rau, the 141-key upscale property is the group's eighth owned hotel and its second property in Indore.

Designed for business travellers, weddings, events, and social celebrations, the hotel features six event venues, three food and beverage outlets, a swimming pool, speciality dining, and butler services. The opening takes Pride's Madhya Pradesh portfolio to five hotels across Indore, Bhopal, Ujjain, and Jabalpur. Pride currently operates 40 hotels with 3,204 keys, while 33 confirmed projects comprising 2,367 additional keys are in its development pipeline — potentially taking the portfolio beyond 70 hotels nationwide. ■

Maharashtra takes tourism into classrooms

Maharashtra Tourism has stepped up efforts to establish Youth Tourism Clubs across schools and colleges, aiming to build tourism awareness among students and encourage responsible travel. The initiative seeks to engage young people with the state's heritage, culture, destinations, and tourism opportunities while developing a deeper understanding of the sector.

Through the clubs, students will participate in tourism-related activities, educational visits, heritage programmes, competitions, and awareness initiatives. The programme also aims to familiarise young people with career and entrepreneurial opportunities within tourism and hospitality. By taking tourism education beyond conventional classrooms, the state hopes to develop informed young travellers and ambassadors who can promote local destinations, cultural preservation, and sustainable practices — while strengthening youth participation in Maharashtra's evolving tourism ecosystem. ■





SUSTAINABILITY moves from intent to INVESTMENT

Madhubhan Resort & Spa's approach to sustainability spans design, energy, agriculture, waste, and guest behaviour, illustrating how environmental considerations can be integrated into hotel operations.

HRAWI Bureau

Sustainability in hospitality is increasingly moving beyond isolated green measures towards decisions that influence how properties are designed, operated, and maintained. At Madhubhan Resort & Spa in Anand, Gujarat, that approach is visible across both infrastructure and everyday operations.

The property was recently named 'Green Hotel of the Year – Luxury 2026' at the 56th Annual Convention of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) in Varanasi. The recognition provides a timely lens through which to examine the measures implemented at the resort and, more broadly, how environmental considerations can be incorporated into a luxury hospitality operation.

Some of these interventions date back to the property's development. **Prayasvinbhai Patel**, Promoter of Madhubhan and CMD, Elecon Engineering Ltd, was involved from the planning stages through execution. Existing vegetation subsequently influenced elements of the resort's layout.

Its 100-metre-long swimming pool, for example, was designed to meander around mature trees rather than require their removal. Pathways were similarly curved

around existing vegetation. Such design choices illustrate an approach in which conservation considerations are addressed before operations begin, rather than introduced retrospectively.

Measuring impact

The more quantifiable measures are found in the resort's energy and food systems. Spread across 25 acres, Madhubhan has a 13-acre certified organic farm, which supports its farm-to-fork programme. The property has also installed a 1.2 MW solar power plant, currently meeting approximately 40 per cent of its electricity requirements.

Energy efficiency extends to less obvious areas of hotel operations. Madhubhan's heat-pump system produces cold air as part of its operation. Instead of allowing this output to dissipate, the property redirects it to the in-house laundry, reducing the ambient temperature in the workspace while making use of energy that would otherwise be lost.

Other measures address water, waste, procurement, and single-use materials. These include in-house composting, a glass water-bottling facility, elimination of single-use plastics, use of eco-friendly materials for repairs and maintenance where feasible, and a no-bin system in the staff cafeteria. Local sourcing under its 'Vocal for Local' approach forms another part of the operating model.

Sustainable design, energy efficiency, agriculture, and waste management bring environmental considerations into everyday hotel operations



Manohar S Gurung, VP, Madhuban Resort & Spa accepting the award for Green Hotel of the Year — Luxury



The property holds IGBC Platinum certification and was the first recipient of the Ministry of Tourism's Travel for LiFE Gold certification. Taken together, these interventions demonstrate an important distinction in hotel sustainability: environmental performance depends not on a single flagship project, but on multiple operational decisions across departments. Energy, engineering, food production, procurement, housekeeping, and waste management all contribute to the overall footprint of a property.

Extending participation

Guest behaviour is another part of that equation. Hotels have traditionally encouraged guests to reuse towels or decline daily linen changes, but Madhubhan has attached a financial incentive to the decision. Guests opting out of daily linen laundering receive a credit equivalent to that day's laundry cost in their folio. Those arriving in electric vehicles receive an additional 5 per cent discount, irrespective of the package booked or facilities used.

The measures shift some environmental choices from passive messaging to incentivised participation. They also raise a wider question for hospitality businesses: whether measurable incentives can be more effective than simply





MANOHAR S. GURUNG
Vice President
Madhubhan Resort & Spa
Anand, Gujarat

asking guests to make sustainable choices. Environmental initiatives associated with the property's promoters have also extended outside the resort. During her tenure as Chairperson of FICCI FLO in 2020–21, **Taruna Patel**, CEO and Promoter of Madhubhan, initiated the 'Throw to Grow' campaign, through which one crore seed balls were distributed across Gujarat.

Seeds were embedded in mud balls to protect them after dispersal and support germination during the monsoon. For the hospitality sector, the relevance of Madhubhan's approach lies less in any individual initiative than in the combination of measures across the property's lifecycle. Design decisions preserve existing vegetation; renewable energy addresses electricity consumption; agriculture connects food with sourcing; engineering tackles efficiency; and incentives bring guests into the equation. As sustainability expectations increase across hospitality, the challenge is to translate environmental intent into identifiable and measurable outcomes.

Madhubhan's experience offers one example of that transition — and of how sustainability can increasingly become an operational consideration rather than a standalone programme.

Guest incentives extend the sustainability conversation beyond hotel operations to individual choices during each stay



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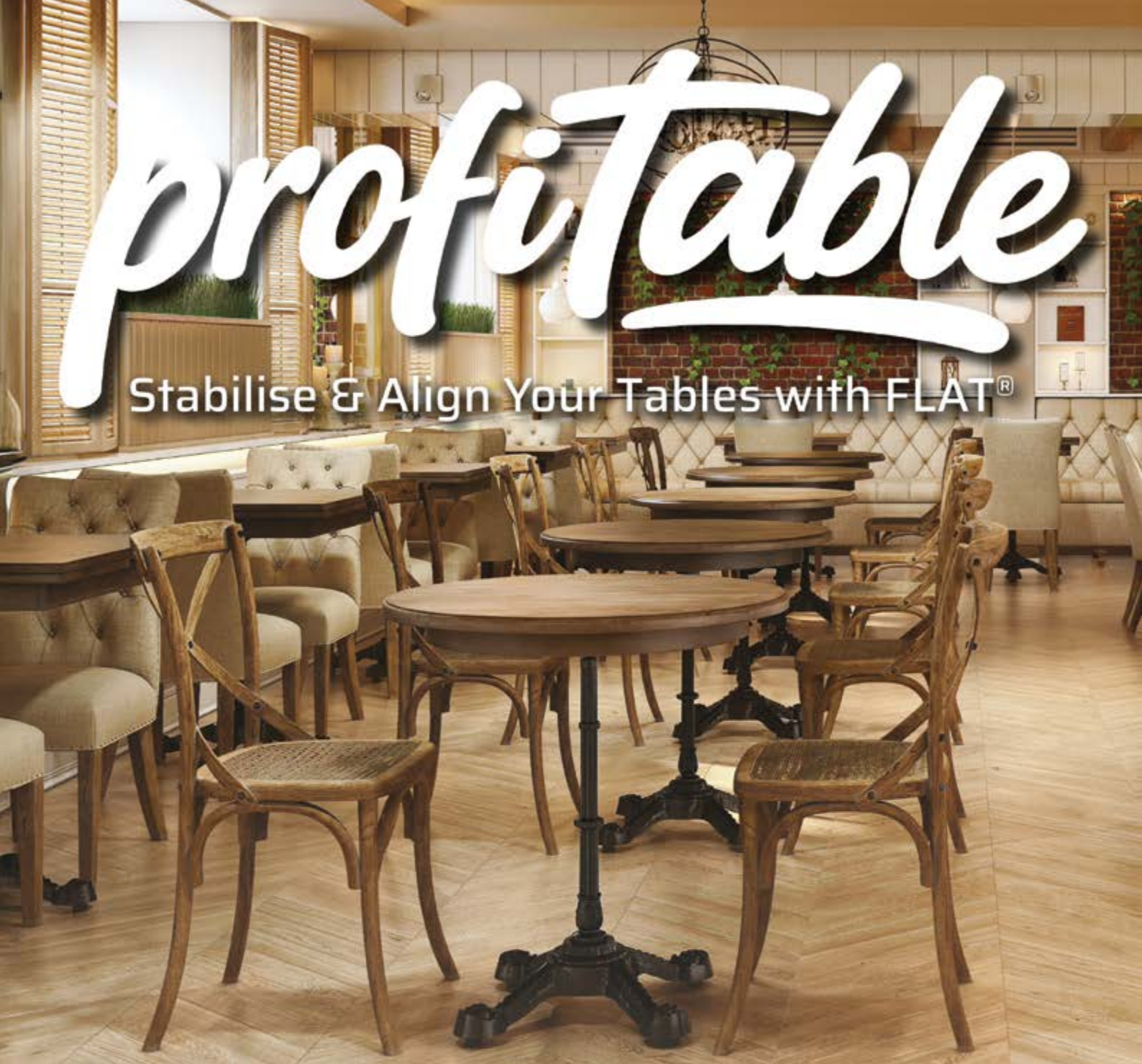




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