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News

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Dear Members,

Following the successful conduct of Karnataka International Travel Expo (KITE) 2025 in Karnataka, SIHRA turned its focus to Andhra Pradesh, initiating a series of engagements with key stakeholders, including a significant interaction with **N. Chandrababu Naidu**, Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh.

The Executive Committee (EC) Meeting of SIHRA was convened at Hyatt Place, Vijayawada, graciously hosted by **RV Swamy**, Chairman, Hyatt Place and President, Andhra Pradesh Hoteliers Association. On the eve of the meeting, SIHRA organised an interactive session with prominent hoteliers and senior government officials. The session witnessed the presence of **Kandula Durgesh**, Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Government of Andhra Pradesh, and **Dr G Lakshmisha**, Collector and District Magistrate, NTR District. Both dignitaries addressed the gathering, sharing the government's vision and future plans to boost tourism and the hospitality sector in the state.

Responding to the various recommendations put forth by SIHRA, the Tourism Minister positively acknowledged and accepted the suggestions. Notably, as a direct outcome of the discussion, the Andhra Pradesh government reduced the liquor license fee from ₹60 lakh to ₹25 lakh—a significant step towards encouraging growth in the hospitality industry. The Minister also extended an invitation to SIHRA members to explore investment opportunities in hotel projects across the state, assuring full facilitation and support from the government.

Dr G Lakshmisha, in his address, elaborated on the untapped potential of the NTR District and identified key destinations that could be developed into hospitality hubs. He also expressed the district administration's willingness to lease government revenue land for hotel development.

Additionally, **Krishna Teja Mylavaram**, Joint Secretary to the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, attended the evening interaction and assured the Executive Committee of his full support.

The SIHRA EC Meeting also welcomed **Ajay Jain**, Special Chief Secretary, Youth Advancement, Tourism and Cultural Department, as a special invitee. SIHRA presented him with a memorandum detailing key industry recommendations, including the long-standing request for industry status benefits for hotels. Jain engaged in meaningful discussions with members and on behalf of the state government. He assured that the Andhra Pradesh government would actively facilitate hospitality investments, offering end-to-end support to investors in securing required clearances.

“
AP Tourism Minister also extended an invitation to SIHRA members to explore investment opportunities in hotel projects across the state.”
”

Following the meeting, the SIHRA delegation, had the honour of meeting the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh at his residence. He warmly received the delegation and spent over 45 minutes in an engaging discussion focused on tourism and hospitality industry in this state. He expressed his full support for SIHRA's recommendations and conveyed the government's commitment to strengthen the tourism ecosystem and provide a conducive milieu for the growth of hospitality infrastructure in Andhra Pradesh. He also welcomed future engagements to further these efforts.

Best Regards,
K Syama Raju
President
SIHRA

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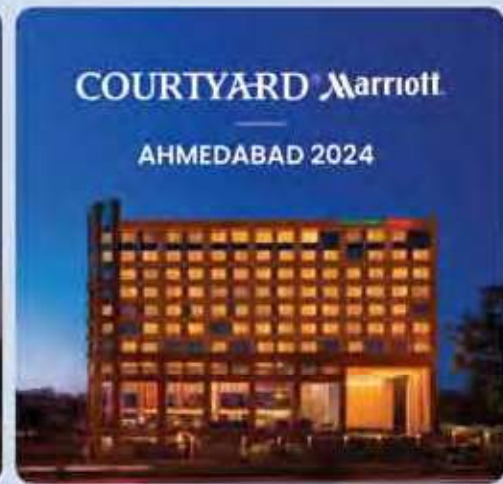


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CONTENTS



9

9 Eco-First hospitality

K Syama Raju, President, SIHRA, believes that regenerative tourism is imperative and hospitality stakeholders have the onus to cultivate greater awareness for it.



16

16 Tourism with purpose

Building resilient and inclusive infrastructure is key to responsible tourism, say global hospitality leaders at FHRAL's 2nd Tourism Sustainability Summit.



20

20 Film, fantasy & wanderlust

From students to MICE gatherings, Ramoji Film City welcomes all, guiding them through a vivid world of cinematic history and creativity.

24 Kerala's hospitality calls for strong support

The Association of Approved and Classified Hotels of Kerala (AACHK) seeks enhanced strategic support for its members, who are grappling with challenges on multiple fronts.



24

26 Demand surges for MICE & Wedding: NHCC

Prithvi Pal Singh Anand, Director, Sales & Marketing, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC, says, post-pandemic MICE & wedding business is witnessing a noticeable traction at their properties.



26

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Bridging gaps in South

To empower the hospitality sector in Southern region of India, SIHRA is making sure to step up proactively and bridge the gap between public and private partnerships.

As South India Hotels and Restaurants Association (SIHRA) continues to spearhead a wide range of initiatives aimed at energising tourism and hospitality across South India, states like Kerala and Andhra Pradesh are picking up the momentum and stepping up their game. Andhra Pradesh recently took a cue from SIHRA's recommendations, revising its liquor license fee structure and Kerala too fine-tuned its Liquor Policy for 2025–26, lending an ear to the long-standing concerns of hotel operators. Here is a roundup of the latest moves, milestones, and meaningful conversations being led by the association:

EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FROM AP'S CHIEF MINISTER

K. Syama Raju, President, SIHRA, met with **N. Chandrababu Naidu**, CM, Andhra Pradesh (AP), to discuss key initiatives for the promotion of tourism and hospitality in the state. The Chief Minister expressed his strong support for the hospitality sector and highlighted the crucial role of private stakeholders in advancing tourism in Andhra.



MEETING UNION MINISTER OF DEFENCE

Recently, **K Syama Raju** met **Rajnath Singh**, Minister of Defence, Government of India, along with **Vijayeswari**, Managing Director, Ramoji Rao Film City, Hyderabad, and discussed the industry matters.

SIHRA EC MEET IN VIJAYAWADA

SIHRA's Executive Committee (EC) meeting took place at Hyatt Palace, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. An evening of interactive session was organised, which was graced by **Ajay Jain**, Special Chief Secretary to the Govt, Youth Advancement, Tourism and Cultural Department, Andhra Pradesh Govt. along with **Kandula Durgesh**, Tourism Minister, Andhra Pradesh Govt.; **Krishna Teja Mylavarapu**,

Joint Secretary to the Deputy Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh; **Dr G. Lakshmisha**, Collector & DM, Vijayawada; **T Natarajan**, Secretary, SIHRA; and **R V Swamy**, President, Andhra Pradesh Hotels Association. During the session, Jain felicitated SIHRA's President, while EC presented the industry recommendations to the officials. ♦





K Syama Raju, President, SIHRA, believes, as the first touchpoint, hotels and restaurants have onus to inspire travellers for sustainable choices promoting regenerative tourism.

Tourism, at its best, can be a force for good—empowering communities, preserving cultures and conserving nature. However, the rising concerns of overtourism have made it imperative to rethink our approach. Regenerative tourism goes beyond sustainability; it seeks not just to minimise damage but to leave a place better than we found it. This philosophy aligns perfectly with the values we must uphold in South India, a region rich in biodiversity, heritage and culture.

To effectively promote regenerative tourism, awareness is key. We need collaborative efforts between government bodies, tourism boards, local communities and private stakeholders. Policies must encourage the dispersal of tourists across lesser-known but equally enchanting destinations, thereby reducing the burden on hotspots. This calls for smart marketing strate-

gies and infrastructure development in tier II and rural regions. Tourists and guests should be engaged not just as visitors but as participants—through eco-volunteering, community-based experiences and responsible travel education.

The hospitality sector plays a central role in this mission. As one of the first touchpoints for travellers, hotels and restaurants are uniquely positioned to inspire sustainable choices. By adopting eco-friendly practices—energy efficiency, waste reduction, sourcing local produce and promoting zero-mile food—we can lead by example. Moreover, properties must collaborate with local artisans, farmers and guides to create inclusive tourism models that channel economic benefits directly to communities.

SIHRA encourages its members to go beyond compli-



ance and become custodians of the destinations they serve. Green certifications, staff training, water conservation and biodiversity protection should not be considered add-ons but necessities. We also advocate for hospitality to act as storytellers—curating authentic local experiences that educate guests on the cultural and ecological significance of the places.

“Policies must encourage the dispersal of tourists across lesser-known but equally enchanting destinations, thereby reducing the burden on hotspots.”

Regenerative tourism is not just a trend—it is a responsibility. South India has long embraced the ethos of living in harmony with nature.

By weaving this wisdom into tourism through responsible hospitality, we can ensure that our natural and cultural heritage thrives for generations to come. ♦



The 55th edition of FHRAI'S Annual Convention is all set to take place from 12–14 September 2025 with bold new ambitions.

By **DDP Bureau**

Charged with fresh energy and ambitious goals, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) is ready to roll out the red carpet for its 55th Annual Convention, scheduled to take place from 12–14 September 2025, in the bustling heart of Bengaluru, Karnataka. The 3-day powerhouse event is the ultimate convergence point, where visionaries gather, knowledge is exchanged and the spirit of India's hospitality sector reverberates through every hallway. It has consistently served as a vital platform for dialogue and collaboration, facilitating the exchange of ideas to enhance the hospitality sector.

The Convention will bring together over 1,200 key stakeholders, including policy-makers, industry experts, hospitality leaders, entrepreneurs and academicians. With last year's theme being 'Tourism@2047: Incredible to Inevitable India,' the 55th Convention also aims to build on that foundation by exploring emerging trends, inno-

ventions and collaborative pathways to shape a more resilient and future-ready hospitality ecosystem across the country.

This year's Convention aims to build on last year's theme 'Tourism@2047: Incredible to Inevitable India' by exploring emerging trends and collaborative pathways

Speaking about the upcoming event, **K Syama Raju**, President, FHRAI, said, "The Convention is an opportunity to build a roadmap for resilient, inclusive and eco-conscious hospitality growth in India. Bengaluru,

with its global appeal and commitment to innovation, serves as the perfect backdrop for these crucial conversations. We look forward to welcoming industry leaders and changemakers who are shaping the future of tourism and hospitality."

Since its establishment in 1955, FHRAI has been a pivotal institution representing over 60,000 hotels and 5,00,000 restaurants across India. Through its engagement with government bodies, industry stakeholders, consumer groups and international associations, FHRAI continues to contribute to the growth of Indian tourism and hospitality through policy advocacy, education, research and industry dialogues.

Last year, over 800 industry veterans participated in the convention. This year, the number is expected to rise to 1,200, reflecting the growing interest and commitment of the hospitality sector to collective learning and future-focused strategies. ♦



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A step towards better training

In a first, GRT Hotels & Resorts launches YouTube channel explaining Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for industry professionals and aspiring hospitality talent.

By **DDP Bureau**

GRT Hotels & Resorts has launched 'The GReaT Patashala,' a virtual learning YouTube channel to enhance hospitality training through bespoke Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) videos. GRT Hotels initially developed these videos for internal training, the initiative has now been expanded to benefit industry professionals, students and aspiring hospitality talent. This marks a significant milestone, as GRT Hotels becomes one of the first hotel chains in India to offer such comprehensive educational content to the industry.

The launch event at Grand Chennai by GRT Hotels featured esteemed guests, including **Venkatesan Dhattareyan**, Regional Director (South), Indiatourism Chennai, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, who presided over the ceremony. It also featured a panel discussion on 'Basics and

GRT Hotels & Resorts signed an MoU with 'V-Sesh', to connect differently-abled individuals with suitable employment opportunities.

Emerging Trends of Hospitality Training,' which contributed to a rich dialogue on the future of hospitality training. Additionally, during the event, GRT Hotels & Resorts signed a Memorandum of Understanding with 'V-Sesh', a Chennai-based organisation, connecting differently-abled individuals with suitable employment opportunities. This collaboration aims to utilise 'The GReaT Patashala' channel to provide skill development training, empowering differently-abled individuals to achieve professional independence.

Speaking at the occasion, **Vikram Cotah**, CEO, GRT

Hotels & Resorts, said, "Our vision for 'The GReaT Patashala' extends beyond internal training; we aim to contribute to the broader hospitality community by sharing knowledge. Through this platform, we aspire to create a meaningful impact on the industry and support aspiring professionals and students."

Meanwhile, explaining the ideation behind this, **Benny D Ezekiel**, Corporate Manager, Learning & Development, GRT Hotels & Resorts, shared, "We felt the need for a unique learning experience for our staff, which will fortify the standards. In pursuit of weaning away from

the conventional methods of training, we started using videos explaining the SOPs, this went down well with the staff and since then there was no looking back. From making few in-house videos, we touched a figure of more than 80 videos now and benchmarking ourselves to have a digital repository of at least 500 SOPs bespoke quality videos soon. Not to keep the learning to ourselves, we came up with the idea to share it with the industry fraternity. This would enhance the professional acumen especially with the front line staff who can easily grasp the standards since it is available in a video format."

The channel covers a wide array of topics, from SOPs on billing processes to guidelines for accommodating guests' pets. The channel is live now and to access the learning modules, one can visit @TheGreatPatashala on YouTube. ♦

Catering precision

RATIONAL iCombi Pro's MyDisplay interface can bring the maximum standardisation to your professional kitchen saving time and effort.



It is irrelevant if you are preparing the chicken in India, London or Singapore, — or it has been prepared by a seasoned chef or a new hire. RATIONAL iCombi Pro, with its user-friendly MyDisplay interface, makes it easy to deliver consistently delicious and quality results. It is designed to virtually eliminate errors regardless of the location and expertise of the kitchen team.

Vishal Raman, Managing Director, RATIONAL India, says, "Many kitchens are having more problems than ever finding well-trained employees. Sometimes there are also language barriers due to different nationalities that make it difficult to organise training courses

No matter who operates the combi-steamer and no matter where - the ease of use ensures that the cooking quality, appearance and flavour of the dish is always of the same high quality."

VISHAL RAMAN, Managing Director, RATIONAL India

and explain procedures. So how do you ensure the desired high quality?" He advises, "Simplify and customise. With the iCombi Pro, whose user interface can be customised with MyDisplay: Simply create a profile, select the desired functions and save. This means that only the cooking or cleaning programmes that are relevant for the respec-

tive user appear on the user interface, in language-neutral form as an icon or photo. It could not be simpler." The employee does not have to do anything else apart from load and unload. The iCombi Pro automatically sets the temperature and time, monitors the process and alerts you when action is required.

The display customisations can also be carried out remotely. With the ConnectedCooking digital kitchen management system, users can create or change programmes at any time using a PC, tablet or smartphone - with just one click.

MyDisplay offers particular advantages for companies with several locations. If the same cooking programmes are stored on the RATIONAL cooking systems in all branches, this creates uniform standards. "No matter who operates the combi-steamer and no matter where - the ease of use ensures that the cooking quality, appearance and flavour of the dish is always of the same high quality," explains Mr Raman. You can also specify the type and timing of cleaning to ensure that hygiene standards are met.

With MyDisplay, the iCombi Pro provides flexibility as per individual needs in the kitchen. On the one hand, this saves professional's time and effort spent on employee training. On the other hand, despite the staffing challenges, it helps you offer high food quality and safe hygiene standards.

For more information on the iCombi Pro, ConnectedCooking and MyDisplay, please visit: rational-online.com. ♦





Need for **responsible growth**

Collective efforts from all the stakeholders of India's hospitality industry can bring in meaningful growth in the sector, believes Suman Billa.

By **Lipla Negi**

“Are we just going to grow bigger, or are we going to grow better? While growth is sure, the real challenge is the direction we take.”



Addressing the audience as the Guest of Honour and Speaker at the FHRAI's 2nd edition of the Tourism Sustainability Summit, **Suman Billa**, Director General and Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, emphasised that sustainability must go beyond compliance to become a collective commitment. He stated, “Sustainability is not just compliance; it must become every stakeholder's commitment to bring the kind of change that we are expecting.”

Highlighting India's rapid growth in tourism, he noted that demand now exceeds supply, creating both opportunities and challenges. He explained, “While adjustments in capital structure and a more entrepreneurial approach from states are needed, the ease of doing business is improving. The key takeaway is that India is at the start of a long-term growth cycle in tourism and hospitality—one that is inevitable and set to reshape the industry.”

GROWTH BEYOND SCALE

According to Billa, the industry must focus on responsible growth rather than just expansion. He posed a critical question, “Are we just going to grow bigger, or are we going to grow better? While growth

is sure, the real challenge is the direction we take. How do we build a tourism ecosystem that is responsible, inclusive and sustainable?”

He stressed that tourism should be viewed as a shared responsibility towards people, places, and the planet, rather than merely an economic activity. He cautioned, “If tourism is left unmanaged, it can lead to overconsumption, resource stress and cultural dilution. However, if we design our growth mindfully, tourism can become a regenerative force—reviving heritage, empowering communities and championing sustainability.”

MISSION LIFE: LIFESTYLE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

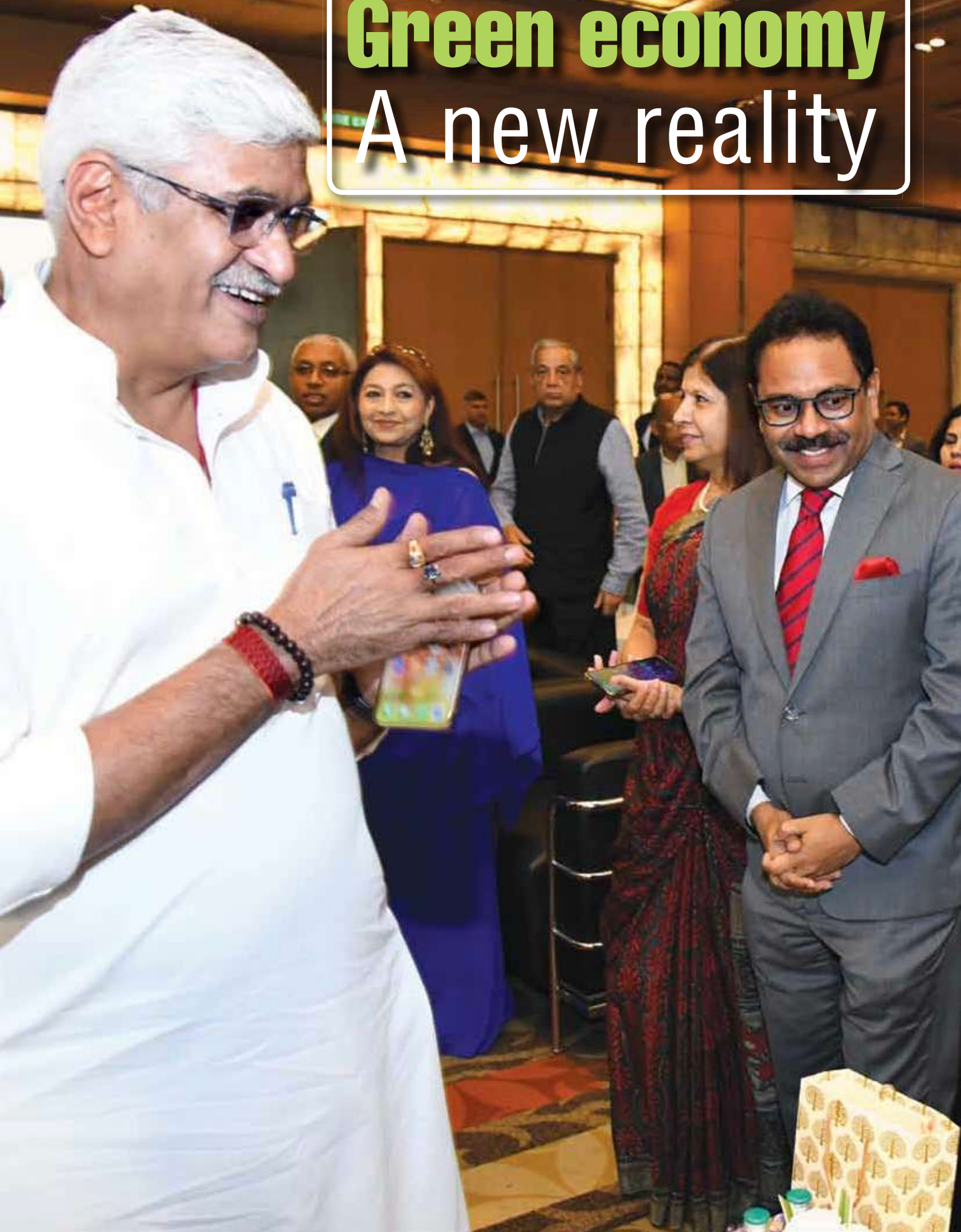
Billa also acknowledged Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for sustainability, particularly through Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), which promotes a shift from a ‘use-and-discard’ culture to a reuse-and-respect’ mindset.

He urged the tourism sector to internalise the ethos of Mission LiFE, stating, “From mindless consumption to mindful use, the tourism sector should integrate this philosophy into its core values.” He also introduced the Ministry of Tourism's groundbreaking initiative, ‘Travel for Life’, which aims to build a community of green travellers. He elaborated, “Travel for Life is a movement to inspire behavioural change through education, innovation, and participation. It urges travellers to choose eco-sensitive experiences.”

He emphasised that India should strive to be not just an incredible destination but also a responsible one. “India aspires to be among the top three tourism economies in the world by 2047. To achieve this, our approach must be both distinctive and responsible. We must carve our own path, rooted in our ethos, ensuring it benefits our communities and people,” he concluded. ♦



Green economy A new reality





Global hospitality leaders and policymakers emphasise to focus on building resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure to promote responsible tourism.

By Lipla Negi

When world leaders and influential personalities are warning the world about the global impact of climate change and irresponsible use of resources, Indian hospitality experts and thought leaders are also trying to shift the discourse towards sustainable hospitality acknowledging the gravity of the situation.

Recently, they explored innovative strategies to balance economic growth with green finance, environmental stewardship and technological innovation, emphasising sustainable infrastructure and community-driven tourism initiatives at 2nd Tourism Sustainability Summit organised in March 2025.





Climate change and sustainability are everybody's business."

GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT, MOT, GoI

ECONOMY'S GROWTH

Intertwining sustainability with global economy, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Minister of Tourism (MOT), Government of India (GoI), urged the industry to act now, "The challenge of climate is now knocking on our doors as rainfall patterns are changing, glaciers are shrinking and glacier lakes are increasing. If timely action had been taken, the situation could have been better. Climate change and sustainability are everybody's business. It is now or never kind of situation for all of us."

Echoing similar sentiments, **Suman Billa**, Director General and Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, GoI, emphasised the need to design tourism growth in a mindful manner.

He said, "Tourism is a rapidly growing sector and the industry is at the beginning of a long-term growth cycle for tourism and hospitality." Focussing more on the direction of progress rather than its speed, he added, "Tourism should not be viewed merely as an economic activity

but as a shared responsibility. There is a need to rethink the approach by building resilient, inclusive and future-ready infrastructure in the industry."

BUILDING RESILIENCE

In his opening speech, **K Syama Raju**, President, FHRAI, underlined the importance of sustainability in tourism and the contributions made by the industry alliance. He further emphasised that while tourism continues to grow, it also presents significant challenges. "Tourism is not just an economic driver but also a catalyst for social change. He called for collective efforts toward a greener and more inclusive future," he said. Establishing sustainability as a conscious choice, **Hemant**



Staying in business now depends on our commitment to sustainability"

HEMANT JAIN,
President, PHDCCI

Jain, President, PHDCCI, said, "Sustainability is no longer a choice or an option. If we do not make our hotels sustainable and more green-compliant today, we will lose a significant part of the market. In the future, staying in business will depend on our commitment to sustainability."

Sharpening the focus on India's target to become net zero by 2070, **Manjeev Singh Puri**, Chair, India-Nepal Centre, PHDCCI & Distinguished Fellow, TERI, urged everyone to internalise sustainability in their organisations. "Our lifestyle in



Tourism is not merely an economic activity, it is a shared responsibility"

SUMAN BILLA, DG & Additional Secretary, MOT, GoI

India has always been aligned with sustainability and as we progress in tourism, let us not forget that sustainability is what will keep resources ready for future generations. It is important that every single one of us acts and work towards climate-proofing our businesses to become resilient."

LOCAL TO GLOBAL

Mainstreaming sustainability as state's policies and roadmap for development, **Sheo Shekhar Shukla**, Principal Secretary (Tourism) & Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, Government of Madhya Pradesh, shared, "MP has a Responsible Tourism vertical within its state department. It is home to 498





“We need to work towards climate-proofing our businesses to become resilient.”

MANJEEV SINGH PURI,
Chair, India-Nepal Centre,
PHDCCI & Distinguished
Fellow, TERI

state protected monuments, 290 Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) protected monuments and 14 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, establishing it as a significant historical destination.” Further, he mentioned that efforts are underway to develop 50 new destinations and 20 cultural sites to enhance the tourism landscape. Speaking on environmental aspects, he said, “The state has the highest forest cover (25 per cent) in India, 12

“Efforts are underway to develop 50 new destinations and 20 cultural sites to enhance the tourism landscape in MP.”

SHEO SHEKHAR SHUKLA, Principal Secretary (Tourism) & MD,
Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, Government of MP

National Parks, 9 Tiger Reserves and 3 Biosphere Reserves, which showcases our focus on preserving eco-tourism, tribal tourism and rural tourism in the state.”

As a special guest and speaker, **Glenn Mandziuk**, CEO, World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (UK), spoke on the lines of sustainable tourism as policy imperative.

He said, “Tourism holds great potential and the sustainability revolution in it is crucial. There needs to be legislative changes, shareholder demand, community interest, consumer demand and employee welfare. Enabling every hotel to operate responsibly and grow sustainably, the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance brings together engaged hospitality companies and the wider hospitality value chain, along with strategic partners, to address key challenges affecting the planet, people and places around the world.”

HOSPITALITY TAKES LEAD

Highlighting the role of FHRAI in starting a dialogue on sustainability and taking it up with policy makers at the Centre, **Pradeep Shetty**, Vice President and former President, FHRAI, said, “Sustainability is not an expensive proposition. It is a beneficial proposition in the long run. This summit plays a role of the catalyst, as an increasing number of large hotels who are leaders in sustainability are sharing data, which is being collated, which is being further disseminated to other members, of smaller size to adopt and to learn from it.”

Over the years, sustainability is not limited to just a commitment but a way of life hospitality industry. Agreeing to this **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, HRANI and Uttar Pradesh’s Hotel and Restaurant Association and VP, FHRAI, added, “The hotel sector has long embraced sustainable practices, taking significant initiatives to reduce its environ-

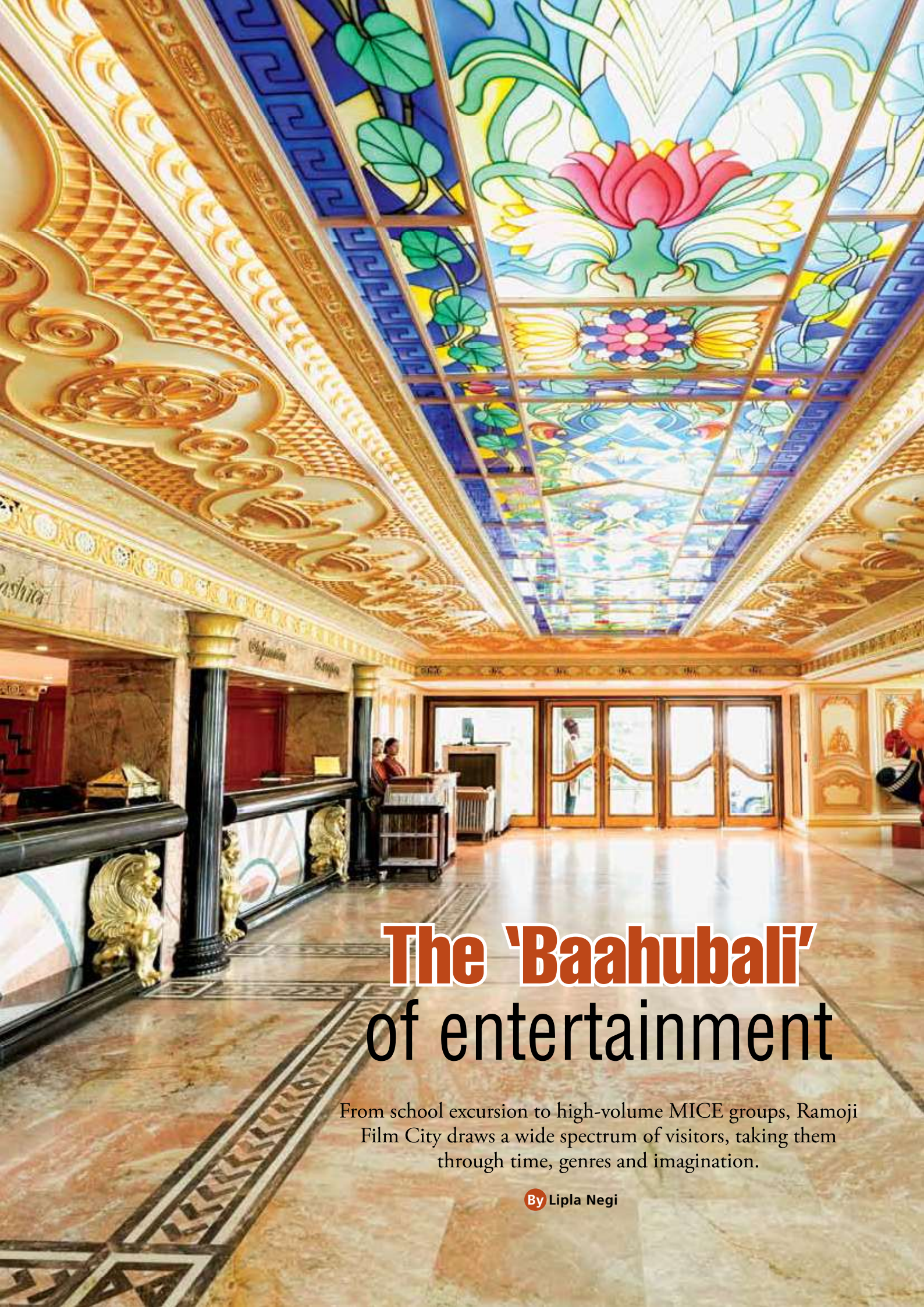
“There needs to be legislative changes, community interest, consumer demand and employee welfare”

GLENN MANDZIUK,
CEO, World Sustainable
Hospitality Alliance (UK)

mental impact. Despite this, we have been wrongly classified under the red category. Through this summit, with the participation of global leaders, we are urging the government to recognise our industry’s true position as it is one of the most sustainable sectors.” This summit was jointly organised by HRANI, FHRAI and PHDCCI, supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Gol, with Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat joining as ‘Partner States.’

The summit marked the inauguration of a knowledge report by PHDCCI and FHRAI, strengthening the discourse on responsible and resilient tourism. ♦





The 'Baahubali' of entertainment

From school excursion to high-volume MICE groups, Ramoji Film City draws a wide spectrum of visitors, taking them through time, genres and imagination.

By **Lipla Negi**



The juggernaut of South Indian movies across both Indian and global audiences is well-established. Known for its iconic characters, compelling screenplays, stunning visual effects and colossal sets, the industry has firmly placed India on the global showbiz map. At the heart of this cinematic revolution is Ramoji Film City—a name synonymous with Indian cinema. It has served as the backdrop for over 3500 movies, including blockbuster epics like Baahubali: The Beginning, Baahubali 2: The Conclusion, Pushpa and RRR, among others.



Envisaged as an integrated film-making studio by its founder Ramoji Rao, it has since evolved into one of India's most popular tourist destinations. "We discovered the incredible synergy between film and tourism as the industry evolved. The idea was to create a space where stories come alive—where guests can go home with memories as tangible as film reels," said Vijayeswari Cherukuri, Managing Director, Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad. Staying true to its original theme

“The idea was to create a space where stories come alive—where guests can go home with memories as tangible as film reels.”



'come with a script, go with a can', the destination offers immersive experiences for both cinema lovers and tourists alike. Today it draws over 14 to 15 lakh tourists annually, catering to a diverse spectrum of visitors.

CINEMATIC UNIVERSE

For film enthusiasts, the opportunity to walk through the sets of Baahubali, relive movie magic and witness behind-the-scenes attractions makes the film city a larger-than-life experience. But Ramoji Film City is not just about cinema.

Its versatility makes it a premier location for corporate events, weddings, product launches and school excursions, all uniquely designed with a cinematic twist. "For corporates, we offer experiences like themed events—imagine a CEO being 'locked up' in a mock jail set as part of a team-building exercise," she shared.

The film city also has an adventure park — SAGA -- considered among the best in Asia, tailored for experiential events. "Top brands such as Tata, Microsoft and HSBC have hosted their large-scale events here, citing the world-class infrastructure, creativity and hospitality as key differentiators," she

stated. The level of curation and adventurous activities around it make it a truly unique proposition for experiential conferences.

A testament to the trust corporates place in this wholesome destination, recently, the Harley-Davidson South Chapter hosted their complete association event here for the third time. "The uniqueness of the experience keeps them coming back—

flexible accommodation options tailored to suit each group.

CARNIVAL & CONCERTS

Recently, the venue played host to a live concert by Ed Sheeran, and upcoming months will see musical tributes to legends like Michael Jackson and SP Balasubrahmanyam. "These concerts especially attract the youth and middle-aged music lovers," she noted. Its new attraction for

The film city also has an adventure park — SAGA — considered among the best in Asia, tailored for experiential events

something they rarely do with other venues," she affirmed.

For school children, Ramoji Film City offers specially curated 2-night/3-day excursion packages. "These educational yet fun trips include themed experiences such as: Adventure day, Ramoji Behind-the-Scenes tour and Movie Magic package. Every year, over 4 lakh students from schools and colleges across India visit Ramoji Film City," she informed. The venue offers customised packages based on institutional budgets, including

the summer includes the Holiday Carnival. It hosts more carnivals every year — Festive Carnival during Dusshera and Deepawali, and Winter Carnival towards the end of December. "Carnival days and festivals are peak seasons for us. We host 15,000 visitors a day and the highest has been 22,000 a day. Over 13 lakhs visitors visit the city on a yearly basis," she informed.

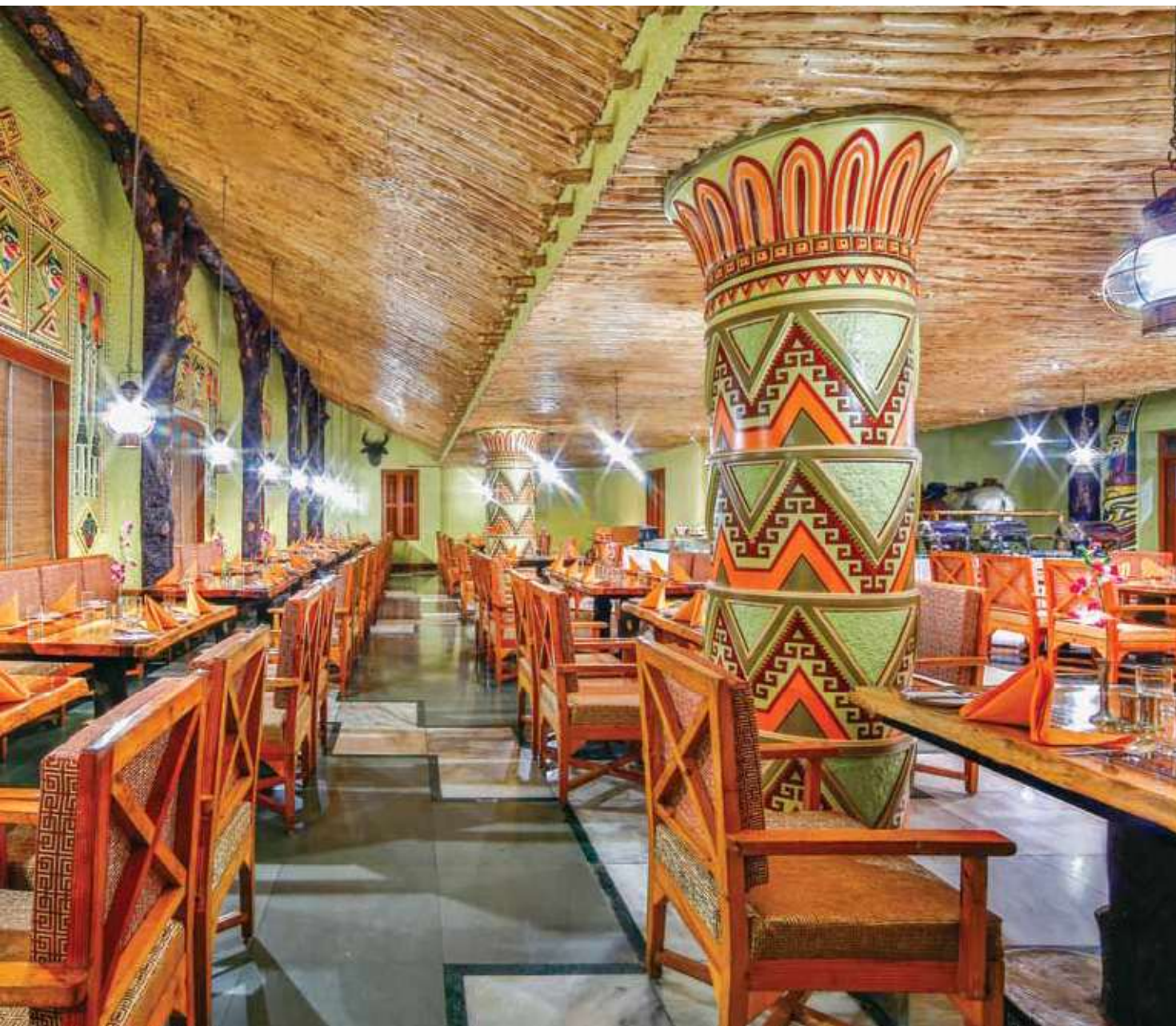
HOSPITALITY AT ITS BEST

It offers multiple categories of accommodation—ranging from 4-star, 3-star and 2-star hotels to

budget-friendly dormitories—collectively capable of hosting up to 1,600 guests per day. Just like the movies, the brand wants to cater to all pocket sizes.

Vijayeswari further shared, "Our most affordable base category begins at just ₹700, designed especially for blue-collar workers as part of company incentives or recognition programmes. Many corporates now organise 2-night incentive stays for their employees, making Ramoji a preferred one-time group travel destination."





For school children, Ramoji Film City offers specially curated 2-night/3-day excursion packages

Adding to the cinematic charm are uniquely themed suites named after iconic films such as Mackenna's Gold, Cleopatra, Amrapali Gold and Enter the Dragon. Each suite boasts a distinct interior and is one-of-a-kind in design. "We also offer exclusive villas for high-profile guests, where celeb-

rities like S S Rajamouli stayed during their 600-day shoot and actors like Prabhas have also stayed during their long shoot schedules," she shared.

To cater to culinary tastes, the Film City features 12 restaurants serving a variety of cuisines. "The tourist experience

begins with a grand opening ceremony at 9am. On regular days, the park remains open until 5:30pm, while during carnival days, it extends until late evening," she informed.

The studio is preparing to launch a brand-new attraction for the Summer Holiday Carnival called 'Maya Lok', which promises a magical journey into the world of films. "The beauty of showbiz lies in its accessibility—anyone can buy a ticket and enjoy the magic of cinema – make it a memorable day for

STAYS

The accommodation portfolio includes 538 rooms:

- 4-star hotel: 172 rooms
- 3-star hotel: 126 rooms
- 2-star property: 228 rooms

kids and family. We want to preserve that experience for all our guests," she said, underlining that Ramoji Film City has all-in-one destination for any visitor. ♦

Kerala hotels look at fixing gaps

Association of Approved and Classified Hotels of Kerala (AACHK) is looking towards resolving various hurdles the members are facing at many levels.

By **Nisha Verma**

In a bid to address the issues faced by budget and mid-segment hotels, Association of Approved and Classified Hotels of Kerala (AACHK) was formed in the 90s. Sharing details of the same, **K J Joseph**, President, AACHK, said, "AACHK is a body that was formed to take up the issues of the Approved and Classified Hotels. Kerala hoteliers owning 3, 4 and 5-star rated hotels realised that there was no strong representation of their sector with govern-

ment and other local issues in the state."

"AACHK is a trade association functioning independently, representing the hospitality industry. We have a Managing Committee which appoints the president for a term of two years and has a nominal subscription to meet all expenses including legal expenses," he explained.

ISSUES IN FOCUS

Claiming that while Kerala



K J Joseph
President, Association of Approved
and Classified Hotels of Kerala

Kerala government has portrayed a very proactive image for tourism, but we have numerous hurdles that put the industry at a great disadvantage."



government is actively promoting tourism, they are still struggling for support. "AACHK does not get any support from the national association, despite all our members being part of it. Kerala government has portrayed a very proactive image for tourism, but we have numerous hurdles that put the industry at a great disadvantage. Some of the issues we are currently fighting for are— industry status, electricity tariff, excise policy, which include dry day on the first day of the month, bar closing time, high license fees, availability of popular wine and spirits, permissions to serve draught beer, permissions to serve arrack and toddy, and the system of linking bar license with classification which leads to corruption. There are several more," he listed.

RESOLUTION

When asked about how to resolve these problems, he said, "Kerala politics is strongly linked with many of our issues and none of our politicians have the vision and capability to understand the problems faced by the industry in the state."



“In the true spirit of any well meaningful trade body, our primary objective is to help the industry when they have problems.”

He further added, "To elevate the hospitality sector in Kerala in this highly competitive environment, we can only continue to persuade our government, which we have been doing for decades. As of now, we are taking every initiative and effort within our means like representation to the government and sending appeals by mail, meeting with ministers etc. It is a huge struggle."

MOVING FORWARD

Saying that Kerala has become a model for the country as far as tourism is concerned, Joseph said, "In the true spirit of any well meaningful trade body, the primary objective is to help the industry when they have problems. An effective body needs to make every member inclusive and be able to distribute authority to state chapters, to make the collective effort meaningful." ♦



From Weddings to Meetings NHCC stays packed

MICE business has doubled since pandemic and large weddings have returned, says **Prithvi Pal Singh Anand**, Director, Sales & Marketing, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC.

By Hazel Jain





Prithvi Pal Singh Anand
Director, Sales & Marketing,
NHCC & HICC

Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) recently completed 18 years of operations, blazing the trail for convention centres of international standards in India. Over the years it has evolved to bring about a transformation in terms of events it holds. Giving more details, **Prithvi Pal Singh Anand**, Director, Sales and Marketing, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) and Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC), said, "We have elaborated our scope from a 3,000 to a 6,000-delegate scenario, which has become more common in India today whether it is corporate annual days, company offsites or incentives. Weddings too have regained their importance as a segment. While MICE business has doubled up as compared to pre-covid, we have also seen enormous success in terms of weddings coming back. India is the only country where you can see weddings with 4,000-6,000 guests. Large weddings are indeed back!"



In terms of collaborating with other hotels around the area that can accommodate the traffic, Anand revealed, "Ours is one of the very few hotels in the country that can accommodate big numbers. Having said that, we do not accept entire buy-

distributed between other hotels as well. Around us we have three Marriott hotels, a Trident, a Westin, a Lemon Tree, Red Fox and a Radisson." The property has 287 rooms and a sprawling 65,000 sq. ft. pillar-less convention centre.

becomes a spectacular venue for varmala. So, our open-air spaces make us different from other hotels in terms of holding afternoon events and evening dinners. Moreover, we have Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) for

holding indoor events as per the customer's demand."

He added that the wedding segment has seen a drastic change since Covid, and guests are willing to spend more again. "Guests are also willing to



While MICE business has doubled up as compared to pre-covid, we have also seen enormous success in terms of weddings coming back."

PRITHVI PAL SINGH ANAND,
Director, Sales and Marketing, NHCC & HICC

outs. Our group ceiling is about 220 rooms out of 287 rooms because we have a base of long stays and corporate guests in the hotel. The good news is that we have an inventory of over 2,000 rooms within a vicinity of 5 kms for large conventions and large weddings. So, the number of rooms if required can be

VARIETY OF VENUES

Anand explained that having a variety of venues helps with weddings. He underlined, "We have various venues to cater to every wedding ceremony. Our lawns sprawl across 40,000 sq. ft., called the Novotel Gardens, our poolside has a beautiful bridge over the pool that





explore different options. The HICC has a ceiling height of 42 ft., so one can really create a dream wedding in terms of decor and setting up the venue with no height or space restriction. The space itself is divided into six paths starting from 1,000 to 2,000 to 6,000 sq. mt. So, depending on the number of guests, an event can be planned well inside the convention centre,” he added.

SUSTAINABILITY

NHCC & HICC have taken a significant step in environmental responsibility by installing a cutting-edge solar power system. With 1,818 solar panels spread across 48,904 sq. ft., this installation boasts a capacity of 1000 Kilowatt peak (kWp), generating 4,000 units/day and 1,460,000 units annually—accounting for 50 per cent of HICC’s energy consumption.

This initiative is set to reduce CO2 emissions by 1,022 tonnes per annum. The investment of ₹2.6 crore into this sustainable energy system is projected to yield savings of over ₹1 crores annually, with Return on Investment of just 2.22 years.

NHCC is the first hotel in the region to adopt atmospheric water generation technology, which extracts and remineralises water from the air, reducing dependence on groundwater

NHCC is the first hotel in the region to adopt atmospheric water generation technology, which extracts and remineralises water from the air, reducing dependence on groundwater. The implementation of a dual solar power and water heating system allows the property to generate electricity while heating 4,000 litres of water daily.

Food waste management is another key area where NHCC has made significant progress, with the use of Orbisk technology to track and optimise food consumption, reducing overall waste in the vicinity.

Reinforcing its commitment to responsible hospitality, NHCC & HICC have earned the prestigious Green Key Certification, an internationally recognised eco-label. By reducing reliance on conventional energy sources, NHCC & HICC aim to contribute significantly to India’s renewable energy movement and eco-conscious tourism, while maintaining the highest standards of guest experience. ♦



Excise policy stalls Kerala's tourism

FHRAI appeals Kerala government to review current excise policy to ease operational setbacks caused by enforcement of irrelevant regulations.

By DDP Bureau

Terming it as discriminatory provisions, FHRAI has written to **MB Rajesh**, Minister for Local Self Government, Excise and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Kerala, flagging concerns to certain provisions in the Kerala State Excise Policy that adversely affect the state's hospitality industry.

The association sought intervention to provide relief to the challenges faced by the sector. The concerns were as follows:

Monthly dry day on 1st day of month: It disrupts the hospitality industry, particularly MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) events, weddings and tourism-related activities. Eliminating it would help alleviate unnecessary constraints.

Discrepancies in bar operating hours: The current regulations mandate differing bar closing times. In Specially Notified Areas, bars must close

NEW LIQUOR POLICY OF KERALA 2025-26

- 3 to 5-star hotels eligible for temporary liquor licences on dry days for special occasions such as weddings and international conferences
- Applications must be submitted at least 7 days in advance
- Bar licenses will also be issued to luxury cruises, which have 5-star amenities
- The fee is set at ₹50,000 per event

by 12am and in other areas, bars are required to close by 10:30pm.

This policy results in unfair trade practices, as establishments across the state pay identical license fees but are subjected to varying operating hours based on their location.

Linkage of star classification to bar license renewal:

A recent circular from the Kerala State Excise Department stipulates that bar licenses for the upcoming fiscal year will only be granted upon submission of a valid hotel star classification certificate. However, delays in the classification and re-classification processes have left many hotels unable to obtain re-classification after their previous certifications expired. As a result, the industry urges to delink the hotel star classification from the bar license renewal process or allow bar licenses to be issued with a provision to submit the Star Classification Certificate within the financial year.

Although in a new development, Kerala has recently launched new Liquor Policy 2025-26, easing norms for 3 to 5-star hotels on dry days for special occasions such as weddings and international conferences. Additionally, bar licenses will also be issued to luxury cruises. ♦

The current regulations mandate differing bar closing times, resulting in unfair trade practices



Raising bar for kitchen versatility

Razi Haider, shares how space-saving combi oven can efficiently streamline kitchen operations to meet diverse cooking needs.

By **Hazel Jain**



Tell us about your recently launched 'Justa Core Combi' oven in India.

The Justa Core Combi is a high-end combi oven from our factory in China, making its debut in India after successful launches in other countries. It is designed to handle multiple tasks—all-in-one compact unit. What is unique is its integrated boiler system, delivering premium performance at an economical price point.

What gap does this product address in India's hospital-ity sector?

The industry is booming, but kitchens today face two critical challenges—space constraints and labour shortages. The product eliminates the need for multiple appliances—it is a single solution for diverse needs. This bridges the gap between high



performance and operational cost-effectiveness.

How are you ensuring users adapt to this high-tech?

Training is key. We have onboarded a corporate chef who will conduct hands-on sessions. The focus is on maximising the oven's capabilities—teaching them not just how to use it but how to innovate with it.

Beyond metros, which markets are you prioritising?

Although metros continue to play a vital role, tier I and II cities are leading the growth for usW. In the last three years, mid-tier cities, particularly in South India, have gained remarkable traction. Our current focus is on South India. We are now expanding into markets like Kerala and Coimbatore.

“The Justa Core Combi is designed to handle multiple tasks, all-in-one compact unit, delivering premium performance.”

RAZI HAIDER, Country Manager, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, ITW India (FEG Division)

What is next for ITW India in this segment?

We have more launches in the pipeline and India is no longer a peripheral market. With F&B sector expanding, we are committed to introducing solutions that align with local needs. ♦





CGH Earth turns a new page

From a quiet revolution in Kerala to redefining hospitality across southern India, CGH Earth has not only pioneered sustainability but has remained relevant, respected and relentlessly authentic.

By **Nisha Verma**

India's hospitality story would be incomplete without the mention of CGH Earth, the harbinger of sustainability in the true sense in the country. The 45-year old hospitality chain, spread across different Southern states, has 13 hotels and resorts, 6 villas and bungalows, one cruise experience, three health-care clinics and one wellness retreat in its portfolio.

HOMES OF HISTORY

While the brand started its

journey in Kerala, it boasts some unique properties in Tamil Nadu as well. **Devika R**, Senior General Manager, Sales (Southern Region), CGH Earth, shared, "We have Vishalam in Chettinad, which is an 80-year-old mansion—a father's dowry gift to his daughter that we brought back to life. The house had a tragic past, but we turned it into a home full of love. Vishalam is not just a property, it is a soulful experience. Guests often feel like they are returning



Devika R
Senior General Manager, Sales
(Southern Region), CGH Earth

to an ancestral home, welcomed by the warmth of Chettinad hospitality and the rich aroma of local cuisine. The Chettinad cuisine is our USP here. Local women from the region cook in our kitchen. It is authentic, emotional and delicious."

"Every corner of Vishalam reflects brand's core values—organic gardens, tranquil pool, open lawns and most of all, an unwavering commitment to sustainability," she underlined.



SUSTAINABLE LEGACY

The CGH Earth strategy is to continue choosing properties that align with its ethos of sustainability and pushing local economy forward. The brand has consistently gone where few dare to tread—restoring forgotten heritage homes, choosing offbeat locales and building meaningful ecosystems around them. Whether it is an untouched coastline or a hilltop bungalow, the brand's approach is always one of respect: for the land, the people and the culture.

"When we look at a property or destination, we do not want to be just another hotel in a crowded space. We pick places where we can contribute—be it to nature, to the local economy, or to the guest experience. That is the difference CGH creates," said Devika.

CLEAN, GREEN & HUMAN

While sustainability has become a trend in the industry, CGH Earth has lived it for decades. "We started as Casino Group of Hotels, but today we call ourselves Clean, Green and Healthy.

That says it all," Devika highlighted while speaking about brand's evolving mantra.

However, what truly sets the group apart, is its people. "Our teams do not just serve. They connect. Their eyes smile at you. They care deeply and genuinely. That makes all the difference. Our management understands markets and plans wisely while staying realistic," she added.

NEW CHAPTER

As CGH Earth expands, it is not chasing scale but refining intimacy. The group recently

CGH Earth has consistently gone where few dare to tread—restoring forgotten heritage homes, choosing offbeat locales and building meaningful ecosystems

CGH EARTH SAHA

In Sanskrit, 'Saha' means all together. The concept behind CGH Earth Saha is rooted in the idea of togetherness. Nestled in stunning locations across India, CGH Earth Saha features a diverse range of unique holiday options. Depending on the property, guests can reserve an entire villa or bungalow or opt for individual rooms, providing flexibility for larger groups or couples seeking a serene retreat.

announced the launch of CGH Earth Saha, an exclusive collection of handpicked escapes across India. With this, the company is expanding its portfolio with intimate and private getaways that embody the essence of togetherness and personalised luxury.

"In Munnar, we have the Lockhart Tea Bungalow near tea estates. Then in Ooty, we have Marli Hill—a 5-bedroom sanctuary. Isla's Ridge in Palani Hills is another gem, just over an hour from Kodaikanal. It is for people who want to do nothing but soak in nature," she described.

Pondicherry too has a new CGH Earth bungalow nestled in the French quarter, steps

away from the sea. "We have also got an exciting new opening in South Goa—CGH Earth Saha Mansao Curtorim and Darjeeling is next. We are not stopping. We are just becoming more thoughtful with every step," she shared.

Devika mentioned that while the new units resemble homestays in their warmth, they are quite distinct. "We do not call them homestays. These are professionally run villas and bungalows, each with a chef, manager, service and housekeeping team. It is intimate, but fully supported by one of our main resorts. That is the CGH signature," she affirmed, while highlighting how every action by CGH Earth has a meaningful thought behind it. ♦



Rajesh Gopalakrishnan
GM, The Leela Hyderabad

Rajesh Gopalakrishnan has been appointed as the General Manager of The Leela Hyderabad. He has a proven track record in steering luxury hotels to new heights. Having held key leadership positions across renowned hospitality brands, his experience spans managing operations, business development, guest experience and sustainability initiatives in both established and emerging markets. In his previous roles, he has worked with renowned brands, which includes General Manager at Radisson Hotel Group, Novotel Visakhapatnam and Grand Mercure Vadodara, as well as senior leadership positions with Accor and Greenpark Hotels & Resorts.



Pavan Kumar
Commercial Director, Hilton & Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park

Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park has appointed Pavan Kumar as Commercial Director. With over 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Pavan has a robust background in commercial strategy, sales leadership and convention centre sales. In his previous roles, he had led national-level sales initiatives, oversaw commercial strategies for high-volume business and MICE hotels, managed large-format event planning, corporate client relationships and business development initiatives. In his new position, Pavan is going to play a key role in leading the MICE and business travel segment in North Bengaluru market.



Prashant Chaudhary
Front Office Manager, NHCC & HICC

Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (NHCC & HICC) has appointed Prashant Chaudhary as the Front Office Manager. Prior to this, Chaudhary has served as Front Office Manager at Hyatt Centric Kathmandu and Hyatt Place Hyderabad, where he played a key role in enhancing guest experiences and streamlining operational tasks. In his new role, Chaudhary will oversee the front office team, ensuring seamless guest experiences, optimising operational strategies, driving the ALL-loyalty programme within the property, and upholding the highest standards of hospitality at NHCC & HICC.



Radhish Kumar
Senior HR Manager, Le Royal Méridien Chennai

Radhish Kumar has been appointed as a Senior Human Resources Manager of Le Royal Méridien Chennai. Bringing with him an impressive legacy of over 31 years in the hospitality industry, Kumar is renowned for his dynamic leadership. In his new role, Kumar is expected to spearhead initiatives focused on talent development and cultivating a high-performance culture across various departments. A strong advocate of continuous learning, he plans to implement impactful training programmes, firmly believing that well-designed training is the cornerstone of exceptional employee performance and growth.



Bakul Pednekar
Director, People & Culture, Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru

Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru has appointed Bakul Pednekar as Director of People & Culture. A seasoned Four Seasons professional, Pednekar brings over 17 years of rich, cross-continental experience shaped by the brand's deep-rooted values of empathy, excellence and service. Known for fostering inclusive and purpose-driven workplaces, Pednekar has led diverse teams, spearheaded impactful learning programmes and championed employee well-being, earning admiration from colleagues and accolades from the industry. In his new role, he will be responsible for shaping experiences that reflect the brand's legendary service philosophy.



Vinodh Ramamurthy
General Manager, Pullman Chennai Anna Salai

Vinodh Ramamurthy has been appointed as the General Manager of Pullman Chennai Anna Salai. With over more than two decades of distinguished experience in the hospitality industry, Ramamurthy brings a wealth of operational and commercial expertise to his new role. In his previous roles, he has been instrumental in enhancing guest satisfaction, operational efficiency and market supremacy leading teams to achieve excellence. In his new capacity, Ramamurthy is expected to focus on enhancing guest experiences, driving strategic growth and strengthening the hotel's position as a premier destination in Chennai.



Anahita Nair
Director, Marketing & Communications, NHCC & HICC

NHCC & HICC has appointed Anahita Nair as Director of Marketing & Communications. With over 13 years of experience nationally as well as internationally, Nair holds a wealth of expertise in strategic brand development and partnerships. In this leadership position, she will be focused on driving brand visibility, guest engagement and positioning the property as a destination for business and leisure. She will lead integrated marketing efforts to enhance brand reach and revenue growth. Her extensive career includes key roles at brands such as Le Meridien Maldives Resort & Spa, The Westin Pune Koregaon Park, and The Westin Mumbai Garden City.



Manoj Singh Bisht
Rooms & Divisions Manager, Grand Mercure Mysore

Grand Mercure Mysore has appointed Manoj Singh Bisht as its new Rooms Division Manager. With over 11 years in the hospitality industry, Manoj has showcased a deep understanding of guest services, front office operations and seamless room management. In his new role, Bisht will ensure seamless operations while maintaining exceptional service standards. His role also involves addressing guest needs and implementing strategies to drive revenue growth and optimise the financial performance. In his previous roles, he has worked with prestigious brands such as ITC Hotels and Le Méridien and efficiently elevated the guest experience. ♦

Form - IV

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