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News

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Dear Members,

Warm greetings to our readers! The past two months have been both eventful and productive, marked by renewed momentum in our collective efforts to strengthen the hospitality industry across South India.

As we look ahead to the Union Budget 2026–27, SIHRA remains hopeful that the government will acknowledge the sector's pivotal role in driving economic growth, employment generation, and tourism-led development. Hospitality today is far more than a service industry. It is a vital contributor to GDP, foreign exchange earnings, and the integration of rural and urban economies. With focused policy support and fiscal incentives, the sector can unlock its full potential in alignment with the national vision of *Viksit Bharat@2047*.

We continue to advocate for formal industry status for hospitality across all states, enabling hotels and restaurants to access rational financing, utility tariffs, and infrastructure-linked benefits. A simplified and uniform GST regime particularly bringing hotels and restaurants under the 5 per cent slab with Input Tax Credit, along with rationalised room tariff structures, will enhance India's global competitiveness. Increased budgetary allocation for tourism circuits, heritage conservation, destination development, and focused support for tier II and III cities will further decentralise tourism and create new employment hubs.

On the organisational front, SIHRA successfully conducted its 74th Annual General Meeting in Chennai, with over 100 members engaging in meaningful dialogue with the Executive Committee. This was complemented by Hoteliers' Interaction Meetings in Kumbakonam

Increased budgetary allocation for tourism circuits, heritage conservation, & focused support for tier II & III cities will decentralise tourism

and Kanchipuram, which saw enthusiastic participation from local hoteliers. These platforms enabled open discussions on operational challenges, staffing concerns, regulatory compliance, and fluctuating tourist inflows, while also highlighting SIHRA's initiatives such as the Tamilnadu Travel Expo and Kerala Travel Mart.

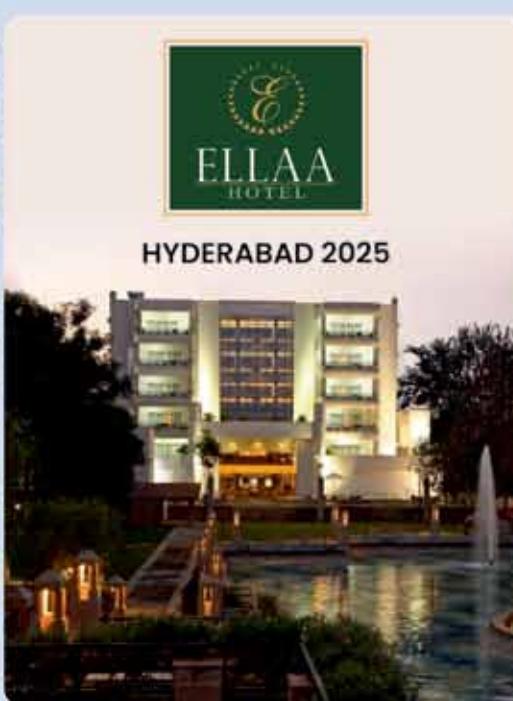
A key outcome was the focused dialogue on promoting Kanchipuram as a prominent tourism destination, leveraging its rich cultural heritage, iconic temples, and world-renowned silk tradition. The meetings reaffirmed the importance of collaboration between SIHRA and local stakeholders to address challenges and drive sustainable tourism growth.

As we step into 2026, we are hopeful that the association's efforts will yield meaningful results. SIHRA remains committed to championing members' interests and guiding the hospitality sector towards a resilient, prosperous future, with greater member engagement in our initiatives.

Best Regards,
K Syama Raju
President
SIHRA

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SIHRA
Office No 3, 6th Floor, Seethakathi Business Centre, Anna Salai, Chennai-600006
Tel: 91-44-28297510, 28297512
Email: admin@sihra.in

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Tel: 91-11-23344179
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PUBLISHER
Devika Jeet-devika@ddppl.com

CHIEF EDITOR
Nisha Verma-nisha.verma@ddppl.com

DESK EDITOR
Amita Pandey-amita.pandey@ddppl.com

DESIGN
Subhash Chaudhary-subash.chaudhary@ddppl.com

MARKETING & SALES
DELHI

Nikhil Jeet - nikhil.jeet@ddppl.com
Director Advertising (+91 9910031313)

Meetu Malhotra - meetu.malhotra@ddppl.com
Assistant Vice President (+91 9650911399)

Jaspreet Kaur - jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com
Marketing Manager (+91 9650196532)

MUMBAI
Harshal Ashar - harshal@ddppl.com
General Manager (+91 9619499167)

Samantha Pereira - samantha.pereira@ddppl.com
Assistant Manager (+91 9987550769)

PRODUCTION
Anil Kharbanda - General Manager
Ramesh Gupta - Manager

ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNERS
Nitin Kumar
Aditya Pratap Singh
Anil Khatri Chhetri

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Interactive meets fuel regional growth

SIHRA organises multiple interactive meetings with hoteliers in South India to discuss various challenges being faced by the industry such as operational hurdles and regulatory compliance.

While South India's hospitality sector is not leaving any stone unturned to strengthen regional growth, SIHRA continues to drive progress through diverse initiatives and active engagement across industry platforms, ensuring key issues are voiced and addressed effectively.

SINGARAM GRACES OATH CEREMONY OF SKÅL PRESIDENT

SKÅL International, Coimbatore, invited **Sundar Singaram**, Director, Operations, SIHRA, to grace the swearing-in ceremony of the newly appointed President of SKÅL International, **Ramesh Chandrakumar**, who is also a distinguished member of SIHRA. Singaram had the honour of attending the event as the esteemed Guest of Honour.

The ceremony reflected the vibrant hospitality culture of the region and witnessed an impressive gathering of prominent hoteliers and hospitality industry leaders from Coimbatore and surrounding areas.

Adding grandeur to the occasion, the SKÅL National President, the SKÅL Asia Vice President, and the Tourist Officer of Coimbatore graced the event. The ceremony not only marked the formal induction of the new leadership but also provided a valuable networking platform for hospitality professionals from the Southern region. The gathering underscored SKÅL International's commitment to global tourism growth and its focus on building strong professional connections across the industry.





SIHRA CONVENES 74TH AGM IN CHENNAI

SIHRA's 74th Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held at the Feathers Hotel in Chennai recently. Over 100 members participated and interacted with **K Syama Raju**, President, SIHRA, and Executive Members.

actively engaged with Sundar Singaram, Director, Operations, SIHRA. During the meeting, Singaram outlined SIHRA's various activities, focusing on the support services provided to its members.

Key services discussed included the Tamilnadu Travel Expo (TTE) and Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) initiatives, aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and industry collaboration among hoteliers. The interactive session provided a valuable platform for sharing insights and addressing industry concerns.

MEETING HOTELIERS IN KUMBAKONAM

SIHRA organised a Hoteliers' Interaction Meeting at Lilac Hotel, Kumbakonam. The event witnessed the participation of over 50 hoteliers, who





INTERACTION WITH HOTELIERS FROM KANCHIPURAM

SIHRA successfully organised an interactive meeting with hoteliers from Kanchipuram. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 30 hoteliers representing diverse establishments across the region.

The meeting served as a dynamic platform for open dialogue between the hoteliers and Sundar Singaram, Director, Operations, SIHRA. During the session, participants actively engaged in discussions concerning the myriad of challenges being faced by the hotel industry in Kanchipuram. Key issues such as operational hurdles, staffing concerns, regulatory compliance, and the impact of fluctuating tourist inflow were deliberated upon with the aim of identifying feasible solutions.

A focal point of the meeting was the strategic promotion of Kanchipuram as a significant tourist destination. SIHRA highlighted the rich cultural and historical heritage of the city, renowned for its ancient temples and exquisite silk sarees, and discussed various strategies to enhance its visibility among domestic and international tourists. Additionally, SIHRA elaborated on its initiative to boost tourism in the region through TTE.

The members present were briefed on how this initiative aims to showcase the region's potential, attract more visitors, and in turn, stimulate the local hospitality sector. The meeting concluded with a consensus on the importance of collaborative efforts between SIHRA and the local hoteliers to address industry challenges and further the growth of tourism in Kanchipuram.

MEETING TOURISM MINISTER OF TAMIL NADU

Recently, SIHRA members along with Sundar Singaram, Director, Operations, SIHRA, met **R Rajendran**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu. They discussed new strategies and opportunities to promote Tamil Nadu, and attract more tourists. They deliberated the initiatives to tackle the tourism challenges in the state. ♦

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SIHRA calls for easier licensing in Budget 2026–27

SIHRA urges the government to consider hospitality-friendly policies like industry status, simplified licensing norms, and fiscal incentives for sustainability in the next Union Budget.

By DDP Bureau

As we approach the Union Budget 2026–27, SIHRA remains optimistic that the Union government will recognise its crucial role in driving India's economic growth, employment generation, and tourism-led development. The hospitality sector is not merely a service provider but a key contributor to GDP, foreign exchange earnings, and rural-urban economic integration.

The industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience post-pandemic, yet it continues to grapple with structural challenges such as high taxation, limited access to institutional credit, and inadequate infrastructure support. A focused policy push and fiscal incentives from the government can unleash the full potential of this sector, aligning with the national vision of *Viksit Bharat@2047*.

KEY EXPECTATIONS

K Syama Raju, President, SIHRA, urged the government to view tourism and hospitality as a long-term economic multiplier and consider the following for inclusive growth:

Infrastructure and industry status: Hospitality should be accorded formal in-

dustry status across all states, enabling hotels and restaurants to access lower interest rates, utility tariffs, and financing benefits on par with other infrastructure sectors.

Rationalisation of GST: The sector seeks a rationalised and uniform GST structure particularly by bringing restaurants and hotels into the 5 per cent slab under the Input Tax Credit (ITC) regime and aligning room tariff slabs to make India more globally competitive.

Tourism infrastructure development: Enhanced budgetary allocation for tourism circuits, heritage conservation, and destina-

tion development is essential. Support for tier II and III cities will help decentralise tourism and create new employment hubs.

Skill development and employment: The government's 'Skill India' mission should integrate tailored hospitality training modules, in partnership with industry associations such as SIHRA, to bridge the manpower gap and enhance service quality.

Ease of doing business: Simplification of licensing norms and creation of a single-window clearance system for hotels would improve compliance efficiency and encourage new investments.

Incentives for sustainable operations: The Budget should introduce fiscal incentives for green buildings, renewable energy adoption, and waste management in hospitality to promote sustainability and align with India's climate goals.

A progressive, tourism-focused budget will not only strengthen the hospitality ecosystem but also create ripple effects across transport, agriculture, handicrafts, and services. ♦

The sector seeks a rationalised GST structure by bringing restaurants and hotels into the 5 per cent slab under the ITC regime

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MoT's capacity building programme in Coimbatore

The Southern Regional Office of Ministry of Tourism organises a 'Capacity Building Training Programme for Hotel Housekeeping Staff' with the aim to raise service quality benchmarks in the sector.

By DDP Bureau

The Government of India (GoI) is taking multiple initiatives to catalyse the enhancement of visitor experience in the hospitality sector. As part of this renewed strategy, the Southern Regional Office of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), GoI, jointly with the Tamil Nadu Tourism Department, Coimbatore office and Skål International Coimbatore Chapter, organised a 'Capacity Building Training Programme for Hotel Housekeeping Staff' at Hotel IKON by Annapoorna, Coimbatore, under the theme 'Best Practices in Housekeeping'.

The programme witnessed participation from 75 hotel housekeeping professionals representing 25 hotels across Coimbatore, Valparai, and Pollachi.

The event aimed to empower hospitality teams to enhance guest experience, raise service quality benchmarks, improve opera-

The programme witnessed participation from 75 hotel housekeeping professionals

tional efficiency, and strengthen professional housekeeping standards. The programme was graced by **Venkatesan Dhattareyan**, Regional Director (South), Indiatourism Chennai, MoT, GoI. Speaking at the occasion, he highlighted the significance of sustainable housekeeping practices, elevating guest satisfaction, and emerging industry trends driving today's hospitality environment. The event also witnessed an interactive expert session on 'Best Practices in Housekeeping'

by **Dr Eugene**, Lecturer, Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) Chennai, where he focused on innovative techniques, practical demonstrations, and global operational standards.

In the closing remark, **T Jegatheswari**, District Tourist Officer, Government of Tamil Nadu, emphasised the pivotal role of service quality in shaping a destination's image, reinforcing that guest experience excellence directly influences tourism growth and brand perception.

Indiatourism Chennai plans to conduct similar hospitality-focused workshops in other Southern cities in collaboration with industry bodies and academic institutions. This capacity-building initiative aligns with the MoT's larger objective of enhancing tourism competitiveness through skill development and industry partnerships. ♦



iVario Pro proves less is truly more

Minimalism has been the trend for years. If you want to bring a sense of 'less is more' into the professional kitchen, rely on the iVario Pro from RATIONAL India.

By DDP Bureau

Mr Vishal Raman, Managing Director, RATIONAL India, said, "Fast, precise, versatile — that is the iVario Pro in a nutshell." It stands as a game-changing innovation, redefining efficiency and performance in every hotel kitchen it enters. The basis for this claim is its thin pan base with powerful heating elements that reach 200 degrees in only approximately 2.5 minutes. In combination with its intelligence, the iVario Pro regulates temperatures automatically so that nothing sticks or boils over. "This has a positive impact on energy consumption and guarantees excellent food quality."

Another advantage of the iVario Pro in mise en place and service is its flexibility. "In the two-pan models, iVario 2-XS and iVario Pro 2-S, you can boil, fry, or deep fry different foods at the same time," said Mr Raman. If even several dishes are to be prepared at the same time, the pans can be divided into a total of up to four zones — the temperature is controlled separately for each zone. "This minimises waiting time for guests without compromising on food quality," says Mr Raman.

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Choosing iVario Pro means not only saying goodbye to unnecessary equipment but also optimising kitchen processes and food quality





Tamil Nadu sets tourist caps to combat overtourism

Dr K Manivasan, Additional Chief Secretary, Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu, shares how Tamil Nadu is focusing on creating high-value itineraries beyond temples and heritage through coastal experiences, nature, and adventure.

By DDP Bureau

Tamil Nadu has long been known for its iconic temples, classical arts, and centuries of spiritual heritage. **Dr K Manivasan**, Additional Chief Secretary, Tourism, Culture, and Religious Endowments Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, believes the state must now widen its storytelling to match its true potential.

He said that Tamil Nadu's challenge is not a lack of experiences but a limited perception. "People think they already know Tamil Nadu, but they have seen only one layer. There is a much deeper story waiting to be told," he said, explaining that the state holds an untapped diversity that travellers have not yet fully discovered.

The coastline is the first big play. Tamil Nadu has the second longest coastline in India and, according to Manivasan, it offers rare depth for a destination looking to grow international arrivals. Unlike destinations that offer one strong beach cluster, Tamil Nadu's coast stretches across multiple ecosystems. Travellers can explore bird sanctuaries, mangrove forests, heritage towns, adventure hubs, seafood trails, and even Portuguese-influenced pockets. "Our coast is not a single experience. It is a chain of distinct worlds that can create multi-interest itineraries," he asserted.

The other opportunity lies in nature. Tamil Nadu has both the Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats, giving it a combination of hillscapes, forests, and protected reserves that rival better-marketed states. Manivasan said people rarely associate Tamil Nadu with wildlife even though the state hosts major biospheres and trekking friendly terrains.

What this really means for the trade is access to new product lines at a time when travellers want quiet escapes, soft adventure, and sustainable journeys. The state is already cautious about avoiding the mistakes of overtourism. Popular hill towns have started enforcing visitor limits in peak seasons. Manivasan emphasised that Tamil Nadu will grow tourism without damaging nature.

"We are committed to responsible tourism. There is no point earning revenue if we lose what makes these places special." The biggest news for travel operators is the new Tamil Nadu Tourism Policy 2023, which introduces attractive incentives for new hotels and tourism projects. Capital subsidies, tariff benefits, and support for infrastructure are part of the package. More land banks will also be released through the Tourism Conclave expected in January, giving investors access to government and private land parcels in key locations. Manivasan said land is critical for hospitality growth and the state is addressing it head-on. "We



Dr K Manivasan
Addl. Chief Secretary, Tourism,
Culture & Religious Endowments
Dept., Govt. of Tamil Nadu

People think they already know Tamil Nadu, but they have seen only one layer.

There is a much deeper story waiting to be told."

want the private sector to see Tamil Nadu as a place where investment is supported, not blocked," he said.



Manpower is another advantage. Tamil Nadu has one of the strongest hospitality education ecosystems in India, offering a steady supply of trained professionals. Manivasan confirmed that the state can support rapid hotel expansion without facing the staffing gaps seen elsewhere. ♦





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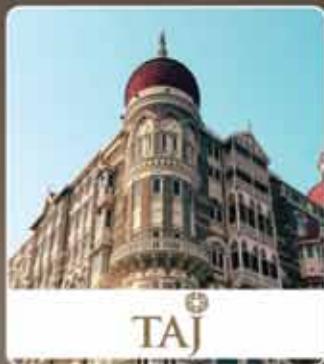


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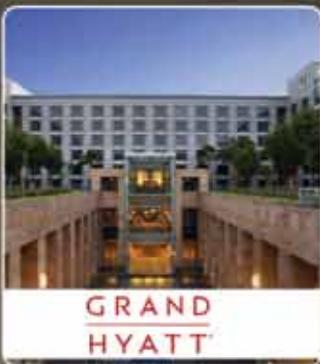


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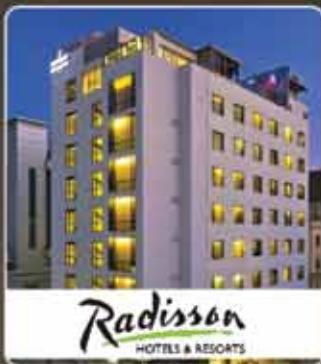
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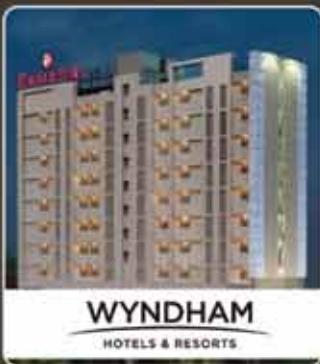
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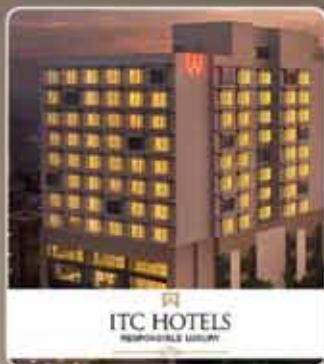
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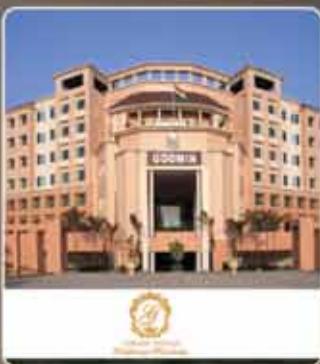
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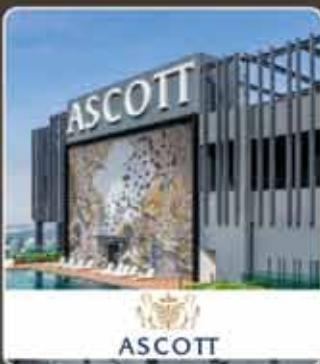
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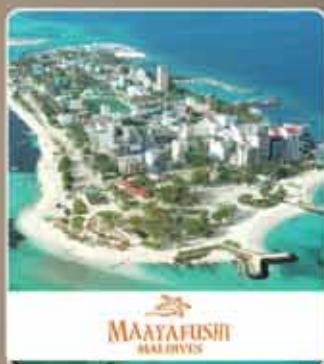
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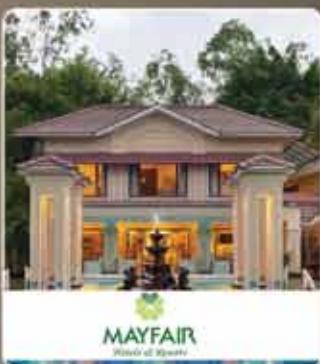
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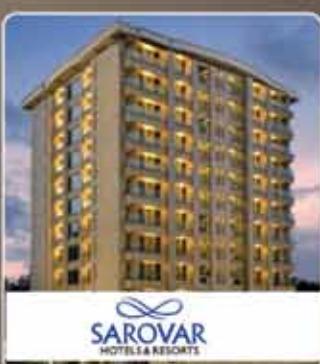
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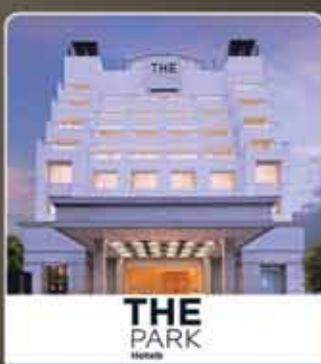
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Kochi, the next value-driven MICE hub

Blending business with Kerala's warmth and wellness, Crowne Plaza Kochi is fast becoming a favourite for corporates seeking meaningful meetings and great value beyond metro cities.

By **Janice Alyosius**

As India's MICE map continues to expand beyond metro cities, Crowne Plaza Kochi is fast emerging as one of the country's most dynamic and budget-friendly event destinations. With nearly 60 per cent of its overall busi-

ness now coming from the MICE segment, the hotel is redefining what corporate gatherings in tier II destinations can offer when scale, technology, culture, and wellness are combined with a distinctive Kerala touch. **Dinesh Rai**, General Manager,

Crowne Plaza Kochi, said, "Over the past three years, MICE has increasingly driven both occupancy and F&B revenue for us. Corporates are now looking for venues that seamlessly integrate business with leisure, and Kochi fits into that vision perfectly."

CULTURE & CONNECTION

Crowne Plaza Kochi has positioned itself at the intersection of business and well-being — a growing trend among corporates blending meetings with rejuvenation and local immersion. The hotel houses Kerala's



higher, Kochi allows large-scale events with the same global standards at far better value," Rai explained.

INVESTING IN TECH

Responding to post-pandemic expectations for hybrid meetings, Crowne Plaza Kochi has upgraded its digital infrastructure. All meeting spaces are now equipped with advanced AV systems, high-speed connectivity, and platforms that support seamless virtual participation.

"The demand for large-scale meetings has not declined; it has evolved. With that in mind, our venues are designed for flexibility — ergonomic layouts, smooth guest flow, and technology that supports both physical and virtual attendees," Rai pointed out.

On the pricing front, the hotel maintains a flexible, partnership-driven model. "While our rates have increased in line with national trends, we tailor packages for repeat clients and long-term partnerships. Our goal is to build value through

largest spa spanning 13,644 sq ft, along with two swimming pools, a fitness centre, and five award-winning dining outlets. "Blended travel is the future, and our brand is designed around it. We curate cultural performances like Kathakali and Kalaripayattu for small gatherings and even offer snake boat race experiences right from our backwaters. These authentic touches transform meetings into memorable experiences," Rai said.

KOCHI'S APPEAL

With its scenic backwaters, convenient air connectivity, and competitive pricing, Kochi is steadily becoming a preferred MICE destination for corporates seeking high value without compromising on luxury. "Unlike tier I cities where costs are evidently



Dinesh Rai
General Manager
Crowne Plaza Kochi

SUSTAINABILITY FOR ROI

Sustainability and operational efficiency have become integral to the property's MICE proposition. "We replaced single-use plastic bottles with an in-house glass bottling plant that produces 1,000 bottles a day, eliminating over 30,000 plastic bottles a month. This not only supports environmental goals but also optimises costs for our clients," Rai shared.

Unlike tier I cities where costs are higher, Kochi allows large-scale events with the same global standards at far better value

premium facilities and loyalty benefits via IHG One Rewards." ♦

With a 60:40 business mix tilted towards MICE, Crowne Plaza Kochi is a clear example of how tier II cities are rewriting India's corporate travel narrative. By combining cutting-edge meeting technology, flexible event solutions, and an authentic Kerala experience, the hotel is successfully attracting larger conferences, repeat corporate clients, and high-value groups. "Corporates today want more than meeting spaces; they want experiences that balance productivity with purpose. At Crowne Plaza Kochi, we have built exactly that balance, where work, wellness, and culture come together effortlessly." ♦



CGH Earth witnesses high domestic visitors inflow

CGH Earth reports a surge in domestic short-stay travellers from Bengaluru, Chennai, and Kochi, even as inbound arrivals from the UK, US, and Europe stay strong.

By **Surbhi Sharma**

CGH Earth Experience Hotels hosted its first-ever 2-day roadshow, 'CGH Earth Panorama' in Delhi and Gurgaon recently, which brought together over 600 trade partners, tour operators, DMCs, and travel agents.

The event aimed to strengthen trade connections, highlight new property launches, and showcase the brand's experiential and sustainable offerings beyond South India.

Currently, the group operates three brands: Leisure, Wellness, and Saha (small-format hotels). With a shift towards management contracts and leased properties, the group is accelerating growth without heavy capital investments.

EXPANSION PLANS

Speaking at the brand's roadshow at Travancore Palace in New Delhi, **Michael Dominic**, Managing Director, CGH Earth, revealed that the group is

expanding beyond its stronghold in South India. Traditionally associated with Kerala, "We are now widening our footprint to North and Northeast India. New projects include a wellness retreat in Uttarakhand, a small-format property in Goa, and an upcoming tea-estate-based property in West Bengal's Himalayas, all set to open by early next year."

More upcoming openings include Saha Villas & Bungalows



Michael Dominic
Managing Director
CGH Earth





in Mahabalipuram and Pollachi, a boutique hotel in Auroville, and an extension of Palais de Mahé in Puducherry. Properties in Kurseong, Kalimpong, Bandhavgarh, Spiti Valley, and Sakleshpur are also in the pipeline. By the end of 2025, the brand will add four new units, followed by at least three more in early 2026.

SUSTAINABLE OPTIONS

Sustainability has always been integral to the brand's identity; thus, it is strengthening credibility with audits and certifications



Shilendran M
Vice President, Sales
CGH Earth

Upcoming openings include Saha Villas & Bungalows in Mahabalipuram and Pollachi, and a boutique hotel in Auroville

from bodies like Travel Operators for Tigers (TOFT) and developing transparent sustainability audits. Efforts include measurable practices like plastic elimination, solar energy generation, and rainwater harvesting, ensuring authentic eco-tourism.

TRADE ENGAGEMENT

The roadshow was designed to deepen engagement with new-age tour operators and entrepreneurs who have emerged post-pandemic in NCR. With lim-

ited bandwidth for one-on-one meetings, the company created this platform to allow agents to interact directly with unit general managers, gaining first-hand insights into guest experiences and property uniqueness, explained **Shilendran M**, Vice President, Sales, CGH Earth. The brand enjoys deep credibility with travel agents and DMCs, ensuring smooth integration into global itineraries. It also leverages social media and hyper-local marketing to target domestic travellers and drive spontaneous bookings.

DOMESTIC TOURISM

While inbound travel from the UK, US, and Europe remains strong, CGH Earth sees a surge in domestic short-stay demand post-COVID — especially from Bengaluru, Chennai, and Kochi travellers exploring Kerala and Tamil Nadu, said Shilendran. The brand has increased its domestic marketing efforts through social media, print, PR, and influencer campaigns to drive visibility and fill rooms year-round.

EXPANDING BEYOND KERALA

- **New projects:** Uttarakhand, Goa, and West Bengal's Himalayas
- **Upcoming properties:** Mahabalipuram, Auroville, Puducherry and more in the pipeline
- **Target:** Four new units by end-2025 and three more by early 2026

The group anticipates 20 per cent inbound growth this year, with strong demand expected from the UK, US, Canada, Australia, and Southeast Asia.

VALUE-DRIVEN GROWTH

Emphasising that CGH's environmental practices are value-driven, not marketing gimmicks, Dominic concluded, "The brand has stayed consistent in its community-first, eco-sensitive approach, building long-term trust among both travellers and trade partners." ♦

SRM Hotels – From coastal charm to spiritual calm

The SRM Group of Hotels is prioritising experience over extravagance at their wide-ranging spectrum of operational areas that help attract travellers with diverse interests to the property.

By DDP Bureau



In the evolving spectrum of hospitality, where travellers demand more than luxury and comfort, SRM Group of Hotels has strategically stretched their operations from the educational hub of SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRM IST) Campus to the business corridors of Chennai, serving everyone from conference delegates to leisure seekers with a model that mixes profit with purpose.

OVERARCHING FOOTPRINTS

Dr D Antony Ashok Kumar, Director, SRM Institute of Hotel Management (SRM IHM), stated that the flexibility, adaptability and cultural connection offered by SRM hotels

is something that makes it stand apart — and a perfect choice for business as well as casual travellers across India.

From catering to corporate travellers with top notch amenities and connectivity at Hotel Ramada, Chennai to serving authentic and delicious food at their restaurants in T Nagar, Saligramam and Potheri, they are successfully adapting to the needs of the travel trade without compromising on the principles of the hospitality industry.

Their latest venture, Gen Z Beta Café at SRM IST, offers diverse cuisines that attract students from across the country, making it

a vibrant culinary hub on campus, adding to their already diverse operational areas.

PARTNERSHIPS

Apart from just focusing on the guest experience and comfort, hotels must also look for the needs of their partners. SRM hotels has a lot to offer its B2B partners — from travel agents and tour operators to MICE organisers.

Sidelining the traditional models of standard rates and rigid packages, they have designed customised B2B packages and competitive commissions that suit the needs and budgets of their partners.



The community-centric approach ensures meaningful experiences for guests while reinforcing the hotel's commitment to responsible and sustainable tourism

They also provide attractive commissions based on volume and frequency of booking, special corporate rates for room bookings and priority booking, and dedicated coordinators for seamless event execution along with complimentary services like welcome kits, airport transfers, and guided campus tours for educational groups. This has helped them uphold a profitable relationship with their travel partners.

LOCALLY FOCUSED APPROACH

An important aspect of functioning in hospitality is the inclusivity in sourcing policies — crafting a space with both local as well as global services and amenities. Kumar highlighted how their sourcing policies are consciously designed to support local economies while ensuring quality and sustainability. This proactive approach towards promoting local economies ensures that hotels are not just practising sustainability on the surface but that it is seeping into the very core of how they run their business.

SRM hotels prioritise local farmers and labour to source sustainable ingredients

anda materials wherever possible, and collaborate with local artisans and SMEs for culturally rooted, eco-friendly products for an immersive guest experience.

"This community-driven model strengthens regional economies and aligns with ESG goals by promoting ethical sourcing, environmental responsibility, and social impact. For corporate clients, it offers a transparent, responsible supply chain that complements their sustainability narratives and reporting frameworks," said Kumar.

EXPERIENTIAL OFFERINGS

While vacationing, travellers prefer packages that offer lively activities over luxury stays in hotel rooms. With a growing segment of eco-conscious travellers interested in local customs and lifestyles, packages should reflect such experiential elements to attract travellers. At SRM Hotels, packages for this segment include farm-to-table dinners with locally sourced ingredients, folk dance performances, and regional chefs. Community-based tours provide an authentic experience for the guests. This tailored approach ensures





meaningful experiences for guests while reinforcing the hotel's commitment to responsible tourism. They can also act as a unique selling point for the brand.

SRM hotels are making further progress in the industry with upgraded digital check-in/check-out, refreshed interiors and rigorous hygiene standards. They also follow a sustainability-centric approach through local sourcing, reduced plastics and energy efficiency. Additionally, to enhance their appeal among MICE travellers and travel partners, they are offering integrated packages blending stays, dining, and local experiences — delivering noteworthy guest journeys while making sure the needs of stakeholders are met. This approach of delivering excellence while embracing innovation and sustainability positions SRM Hotels as a forerunner in the South Indian hospitality industry. ♦



Telangana plans 150-key branded hotel hub

Telangana is set to welcome a premium branded hospitality project in Yacharam, anchoring the Bharat Future City vision and generating over 300 employment opportunities.

By DDP Bureau

The Government of Telangana and Ridhira Group signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the Telangana Rising Global Summit 2025 for the development of a premium branded hospitality project in Yacharam, which will serve as a key anchor within the state's flagship Bharat Future City vision. The project carries a proposed investment of ₹117 crore and

reflects the state's focus on attracting high value hospitality and tourism investments.

The development will feature a 150-key premium hotel supported by two Food and Beverage outlets and a Wellness Centre of 18,500 sq ft. It also includes 20 branded luxury villas with sale and lease-back options. The integrated project is designed to align

with international hospitality standards and is expected to generate more than 300 direct and indirect employment opportunities over the next two years, strengthening Yacharam's emergence as a high potential hospitality and wellness destination.

Expressing gratitude, **Ritesh Mastipuram**, Founder and Managing



The Government of Telangana will facilitate all necessary project clearances through the single window mechanism, ensuring expeditious approvals and seamless execution

Director, Ridhira Group, said, "We are honoured to formalise this commitment with the state and to reinforce our long-term vision. This MoU marks a significant milestone in our journey to redefine luxury wellness hospitality in Telangana. With the government's proactive support and a structured roadmap



for implementation, we are committed to building a landmark destination that will enhance Telangana's position on the global tourism and wellness map."

The Government of Telangana will facilitate all necessary project clearances through the single window mechanism, ensuring expeditious approvals, and seamless execution. The state, through this mechanism, will support timely execution, and Ridhira Group will now pursue formal agreements and prepare a Detailed Project Report, detailing phased development and operational frameworks to ensure timely and structured delivery.

The project aligns with the Bharat Future City framework, the Telangana Tourism

Policy 2025–2030 and the State's long-term 'Vision 2047'. It is positioned to contribute to regional economic activity and strengthen Telangana's positioning in luxury hospitality and wellness tourism.

Bharat Future City is envisioned as a smart, future-ready urban hub near Hyderabad, integrating residential, commercial, industrial, educational, healthcare, and recreational zones. It aims to be a sustainable, net-zero city that combines modern infrastructure, global connectivity, and high-quality urban planning.

The Yacharam hospitality project forms an integral part of this framework, contributing to the city's vision of creating a vibrant hub for business, leisure, tourism, and wellness. ♦



Success mantras: Legacy leaders vs new-age hoteliers

As legacy leaders continue to find consistency and warmth as the success *mantra* for the hotel sector, next-gen entrepreneurs believe in disrupting cliché operations through adaptability.

By **Ananya Kukreja**

From earliest records of inns in 2000 BC to properties opening just yesterday, one priority has never changed for the hospitality industry — warmth. With evolving guest preferences, the meaning of warmth is also changing for the hoteliers. The dynastic leader and next-generation entrepreneurs reveal what philosophies are defining the meaning of warmth and quality in the hospitality business.

LEADERSHIP

Sharing the philosophy of GRT's Founding Chairman, **Vikram Cotah**, CEO, GRT Hotels & Resorts, said, "Hotels, like jewelry, are not about the product but about the emotion on which

their empire is built. Hospitality has always been about warmth and consistency." He remarked that for legacy leaders what changes with every generation is how these are delivered.

New generation hoteliers believe in internal disruption through initiatives like hackathons, rapid experimentation, and values such as 'obligation to invent' and 'be unreasonably customer centric'. "Unlike the tradition-bound structures of legacy hotels, our leadership philosophy blends data-driven rigour with a culture of innovation and humility," shared **Sidharth Gupta**, Co-founder, Treebo Hospitality Ventures. While legacy hotels ooze luxury focused on unforgettable experiences, most new gen entrepre-

neurs believe in democratising the joy of travel, consistency, and high-quality stays.

BEST PRACTICES

Startups admit facing challenges that legacy brands handle

smoothly — be it navigating financial crunches, weathering COVID-related shutdowns, or competing with fragmented unbranded players. Unlike established chains with decades of brand equity and deep sup-



Vikram Cotah
CEO
GRT Hotels & Resorts



Sidharth Gupta
Co-founder
Treebo Hospitality Ventures



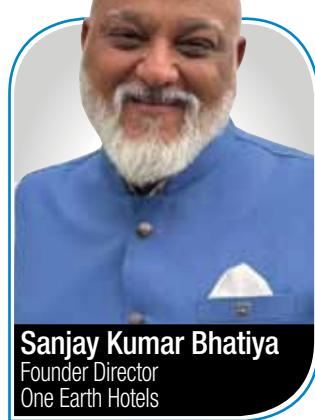
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Dheeraj Kukreja
Vice President
MGM Hotels and Resorts



Sanjay Kumar Bhatiya
Founder Director
One Earth Hotels



ply chains, startups need to build trust and operational excellence from the ground up. "They experiment, they fail fast, they learn faster," said Cotah. Startups do not over-deliberate; they act. Many legacy hoteliers are drawing inspiration from startups, their speed, agility, and community-building ability. The lessons of building a tribe and creating a community of travellers who share values rather than customer databases comes from startups. While legacy roots give credibility, it is this startup mindset that gives adaptability.

Although Gupta asserted that learning from legacy players is invaluable as they have proper guidelines for best practices in service recovery, employee morale, and emotional resonance with guests.

Implementing such practices, mixed with technology and digital tools, helps startups reduce franchise onboarding time by 80 per cent and create a culture of resilience and loyalty.

Whether it is the seasoned tradition of a family-run hotel or the disruptive energy of a startup, hospitality is about making guests feel seen, valued, and cared for. "Whether legacy or startup, we are united by the same pas-

sion — serving the guest better than yesterday," noted **Dheeraj Kukreja**, Vice President, MGM Hotels and Resorts.

Increasingly, both groups are also finding shared ground in sustainability and wellness. Guests no longer want just a comfortable bed. They want experiences that enrich, heal, and connect them to purpose.

Another essential aspect for a hotel to be successful is brand trust — irrespective of legacy. "The common thread here is fostering trust among guests," asserted **Sanjay Kumar Bhatiya**, Founder Director, One Earth Hotels, adding, "Hotels with clear Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals will gain 10 to 15 per cent higher profitability." The next decade will see hospitality

shaped by three defining shifts. First, guests will seek meaning over material. They will look for regenerative experiences, fraternity, and the sense that their travelling journey leaves a positive footprint. Second, technology will be an enabler but not a replacement. AI, IoT, and virtual reality will add efficiency, but the true benchmark of hospitality will still be human warmth. Third, hyper-personalisation will become the norm — every journey will feel unique, powered by data but delivered with empathy.

We are moving into an era where the measure of success is shifting. It is no longer about the size of lobbies, chandeliers, or banquet halls. Instead, it is about the depth of impact we are making on the guest, the local community, and our planet. ♦

Startups admit facing challenges that legacy brands handle smoothly





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Sreejith Kottla
General Manager
The Ramada by Wyndham

The Ramada by Wyndham, Alleppey, has appointed Sreejith Kottla as the General Manager. In his new role, Kottla will be responsible for overseeing hotel operations, ensuring guest satisfaction, maximising revenue, managing staff, maintaining quality, and financial performance, and promoting Alleppey as a premier MICE destination. He will play a key role in ensuring that the property continues providing guests with the high-quality service and exceptional value.



Prakash Jayadevan
COO, The Residency Hotels,
Chennai

The Residency Hotels has appointed Prakash Jayadevan as Chief Operating Officer. In this role, he will be responsible for spearheading operational strategy for the brand, enhancing its performance across all properties, and ensuring exceptional and better guest experiences. He brings with him extensive expertise, having held senior leadership roles across brands, such as Pioneer Holiday Resorts, Marriott International, and The Leela Palaces.



Abhilash Matam
Multi Property Hotel Manager
Courtyard by Marriott Kochi
Airport & Port Muziris, Kochi,
a Tribute Portfolio Hotel

Abhilash Matam has been appointed as the Multi Property Hotel Manager for Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Airport & Port Muziris, Kochi, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel. Matam has expertise in strategic operations across luxury and budget hotels. He has led international hotel management teams and is proficient in Rooms Division operations. Before taking on his current role, Matam was associated with Kochi Marriott as Director of Operations where he played a key role in enhancing operational excellence.



Poonam Tipnis
Head of Sales
Rosetta Hospitality

Rosetta Hospitality has appointed Poonam Tipnis as Head of Sales for Rosetta Sakleshpur. With nearly three decades of experience in luxury hospitality, Tipnis brings in a legacy of strong leadership and a nuanced understanding of guest-centric sales strategies to the new role. In her new role, Tipnis will oversee Rosetta Sakleshpur's commercial strategy, driving value-led partnerships and bespoke guest experiences. She is an alumnus of IHM Mumbai and the University of Mumbai.



Satpreet Singh
Associate Director, Sales
Grand Mercure Bengaluru at
Gopalan Mall

Satpreet Singh has been appointed as the Associate Director of Sales by Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall. Singh brings over 10 years of experience with a successful track record in sales leadership and client relationship development. Known for his active leadership style and proven track record, Singh has shown success in building high-performing teams and improving guest-focused sales strategies with sustainable business growth.



Sahil Ranaut
General Manager, Hyatt
Centric MG Road Bangalore

Hyatt Centric MG Road Bangalore has appointed Sahil Ranaut as General Manager. In this role, Ranaut will lead the hotel's team and oversee all operations, with a focus on elevating guest experiences and driving impactful business results. Ranaut brings over 16 years of progressive experience in the hospitality industry. He has served renowned brands such as IHG Groups, Marriott, along with Park Hyatt Hyderabad as Area Director of Revenue Management.



SV Sathyam
Director, People & Culture
NHCC & HICC

Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) and Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) has appointed SV Sathyam as the new Director of People & Culture. In his new role, Sathyam will oversee talent management, human resources, and organisational culture strategies for NHCC & HICC. His leadership is expected to strengthen the hotel's people-centric approach and support employee engagement.



Dharaniswar Das
Director, People & Culture
Novotel Hyderabad Airport

Novotel Hyderabad Airport has appointed Dharaniswar Das as Director of People & Culture. He will lead Novotel Hyderabad Airport's human resources strategy with a strong focus on talent acquisition, organisational culture, and people-centric operations. He will steer initiatives that enhance team engagement and support learning and development. He will also shape policies, driving diversity, and aligning people practices with the hotel's strategic priorities.



Kartik Raol
Director of Rooms, Four
Seasons Hotel Bengaluru

Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru has appointed Kartik Raol as Director of Rooms. He brings with him nearly two decades of diverse global hospitality experience. Over the years, he has held key operational and leadership roles across the brand's global portfolio, most recently as Assistant Director of Residences at Four Seasons Resort Seychelles at Desroches Island. Raol's journey reflects an enduring commitment to the brand's philosophy of intuitive luxury and people-centric service.



Heena Sharma
Director of Rooms, Marriott
Executive Apartments,
Bengaluru UB City

Marriott Executive Apartments, Bengaluru UB City, has appointed Heena Sharma as the Director of Rooms. With 14 years of experience across Marriott Suites Pune, Port Muziris, and JLL (Accenture), Sharma is known for her guest-centric approach and operational expertise in front office management, facility operations, and revenue optimisation. In her new role, she will lead the Rooms Division, focusing on elevating guest experiences, team development, and service excellence.♦

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airport bellary road, yelahanka, Bengaluru – 560064

Contact : +91-9650044434, 0124-4245430 **E-mail :** info@itwfeg.in
Country Manager : razi.haider@itwfeg.in, +91-9920384666



+91-9650044434