

Putting FHRAI-IHM back on the right track

In 2021, faced with years of indecision and uncertainty regarding its hotel management school in Greater Noida, FHRAI leadership entrusted the revival mission to seasoned hospitality academician and administrator, Arun Kumar Singh. Over the past three years, Singh's experience and acumen have successfully transformed the institute, overcoming various challenges.

The institute's infrastructure is truly remarkable, surpassing many central IHMs in India. Originating from a visionary initiative by past leaders of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) at the beginning of the new millennium, the FHRAI Institute of Hotel Management (FHRAI-IHM) spans seven acres in Knowledge Park III, Greater Noida. Regarded as the second hotel school established by a hotel industry association globally, it follows the first initiated by the Singapore hotel association.

Commencing academic operations in 2005 with facilities designed to meet European hotel school standards, the institute faced challenges due to affiliation issues with a leading European hotel school. Despite attempts to secure alternative partnerships with Indian universities and bring a private partner on board for operations, these endeavors were short-lived.

In 2021, FHRAI leadership decided to revitalize the institute, placing the responsibility in the hands of Arun Kumar Singh, who had recently retired as the principal of Dadar Catering College (IHM Mumbai). Singh's understanding of the hospitality education system, particularly the National Council for Hotel Management & Catering Technology (NCHMCT) system, facilitated the rapid revamping and upgrading of the institute's infrastructure to meet National Council parameters for affiliation.

As the training infrastructure already adhered to European standards, only minimal changes were needed to fulfill National Council parameters, stated Singh. Considering the superior infrastructure, the National Council promptly granted 100 seats for the flagship B.Sc hotel management program, along with

approval for three diploma programs—Food Production, F&B Service, and Bakery—with 40 seats each.

While the first batch comprised only 10 students due to pandemic-induced admission challenges, the team remained undeterred. Singh expressed optimism, stating, "We worked hard in the second year, had fairly good admissions, and the numbers grew further this year. Hopefully, we will break even by next year."

Capacity-wise, the institute boasts one lakh square feet of training space, including smart lecture rooms, multiple training kitchens, a restaurant, housekeeping lab, computer lab, and a comprehensive library. Hostel facilities for boys (130 seats) and girls (60 seats) are available, with ample open spaces for recreational activities. Students benefit not only from financial and technical support from the hotel federation but also from various scholarships offered by hotel and restaurant companies owned by federation members.

Looking ahead, Singh aims to launch more short-term programs for working professionals, seeking permission from the National Council for such initiatives. The institute has also initiated a 'Hospitality Leadership Talk' series, where industry leaders interact with students, sharing knowledge and experience. FHRAI's current leadership is pleased with the institute's reinvention, aspiring to establish it as a leading center for capacity-building in the hospitality industry. Pradeep Shetty, president of FHRAI, affirmed, "We have invested a lot in terms of money, resources, and efforts in reviving the institute. The last two years have been quite encouraging in terms of admissions."