

# HRA Today



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## F&B trends Getting Established in 2021



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to brave the raging seas every day  
and walk side by side  
with hearts that beat in time  
with the waves.

# HUMAN *by* NATURE





# HRA Today

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## President's Message

**Mr Sherry Bhatia**  
President, HRAWI

My Dear Members,

Greetings in the 71st year of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India!

With the vaccination drive gathering momentum in the country, the Hospitality industry was optimistic about a bounce back in business. However, the recent rise in the number of COVID-19 positive cases, our industry has once again come under stress. As it is patrons were avoiding visits to their favorite hotels and restaurants and with the latest restrictions, things are coming to a grinding halt like last year. With no FTAs the sector's revenue has taken a big hit. As per a recent report, FTAs might reach pre-COVID levels only by 2023. Taking into account this, and the fact that most Indians will have been vaccinated in the interim, we have urged the Government to put full thrust on encouraging domestic tourism.

The number of COVID19 cases was on the rise again sometime towards the end of March. Aurangabad was one of the first cities in the State of Maharashtra that imposed a night curfew. Your Association along with the FHRAI immediately made a representation to the Hon'ble Chief Minister – Shri Uddhav Thackeray for urgent facilitative measures in the form of waiver of statutory payments including excise license fees and property tax, among others besides asking for relaxation of curfew timing for restaurants. It was explained to the Government that actual business for most restaurants begin only after 8 pm and a night curfew imposition from 8 pm was tantamount to closure of business. We emphasized to the Government about how all other businesses and sectors were entitled to get long business hours even under restricted timelines but only restaurants were being singled out due to its specific nature of business and demand.

Similarly, a few days later, when the night curfew was imposed across the State, both Associations jointly petitioned to the Government again requesting for urgent facilitative measures for the Hospitality sector in the form of waiver of statutory payments including excise license fees and property tax, among others. Realizing that the Government was not hearing our pleas, HRAWI and several other Associations from the industry joined hands to form United Hospitality Forum of Maharashtra (UHF) and initiated campaign #MissionRoziRoti to highlight our desperate bid for survival. The UHF organized a silent protest outside of hotels and restaurants in the State on 8th April 2021 at 12:30

PM. Lakhs of restaurants participated in the silent protest with employees standing outside the establishments holding placards. #MissionRoziRoti gained momentum also on social media with several restaurateurs and hoteliers in the State posting pictures, messages, and videos showing support and solidarity to the campaign.

Hospitality Associations across the State including Poona Hoteliers Association, United Hotel Association Pune, Nagpur Hotel and Restaurant Association, Aurangabad Hotel and Restaurant Association, Vasai Taluka Hotel Association, Hotel Owners' association of Thane, Navi Mumbai Hotel Association, Palghar Hotel Association rallied against the lockdown imposed in the State. The protest was also supported by various city and district level Hospitality Associations from Beed, Amaravati, Nanded, Hingoli, Jalna, Parbhani, Aurangabad, Satara, Osmanabad, and Vasind among others. Through the silent protests, we once again appealed to the Government to allow us to resume work and if not, asked that the Government takes care of our incomes. We have demanded that the industry be given a complete waiver on all statutory fees and taxes, and establishments should not be billed for water and electricity for the duration of the curbs.

Gujarat too has imposed restrictions in the wake of the second wave of the Coronavirus. Here too, the HRAWI along with the HRA-Gujarat have submitted a representation to the Hon'ble Prime Minister – Shri Narendra Modi to allow takeaway and home delivery services till 12 am for hotels and restaurants in the State. We are in agreement with the Gujarat Government's decision to impose restrictions for controlling the spread however, taking into consideration the industry's year-long crises, have pleaded to the Government for some leeway. Additionally, since several States have issued restrictions on business operations to control the spread, the FHRAI have separately made submissions to the Chief Ministers and the Chief Secretaries of all the States in the country. We have requested the heads of the States for a facilitative environment for the survival and revival of the Hospitality sector. We have asked that the policy of imposing blanket ban or selective restrictions on Hospitality establishments be abolished and under restrictions, again have asked that establishments be given relaxations or waiver of statutory payments such as electricity charges, property taxes and excise license fees, among others.







# F&B trends Getting Established in 2021

**T**he proliferation and spread of the Pandemic have transformed every aspect of the F&B industry by bringing in several innovations which have started to dominate the industry and equips restaurants to stay ahead of the curve in the coming years. They have now become the new normals in the industry.

Let us have a look at some these new normals, which have more or less got well established in the industry.

As the consumer is seeking higher safety and hygiene measures at the restaurants, the adoption of the digital menu is becoming the new normal that supports social distancing within the restaurant. As per Dineout's latest whitepaper, Digital menu has infiltrated about 50 per cent of the market and projected to grow 90 per cent by 2021. Restaurants adopting digital ways in daily operations like a digital menu, digital payments, digital feedback and technology to communicate with their customers will be successful.

Restaurants are expanding their offerings to takeaway and delivery services keeping with the changing trends to cater to the new demands of the consumers. Takeaways and deliveries will gain prime focus post COVID era for restaurants to stay financially viable amid strict social distancing norms. These services will continue to garner undivided attention and grow exponentially by 15 per cent & 30.55 per cent respectively.

Pandemic has led to a surge in demand for home-cooked food and a consequent rise in demand for food prepared by local home cooks and bakers. Dineout report indicates a further rise in number by 4X in 2021.

Increasing trends of delivery and takeaway, fast-paced lifestyles and changed consumer behaviour have further driven the rise of Cloud kitchens in India. At the moment it holds a 13 per cent market share and is expected to expand to approximately 30 per cent in the coming year.

Consumers are now more careful than ever while making food choices.

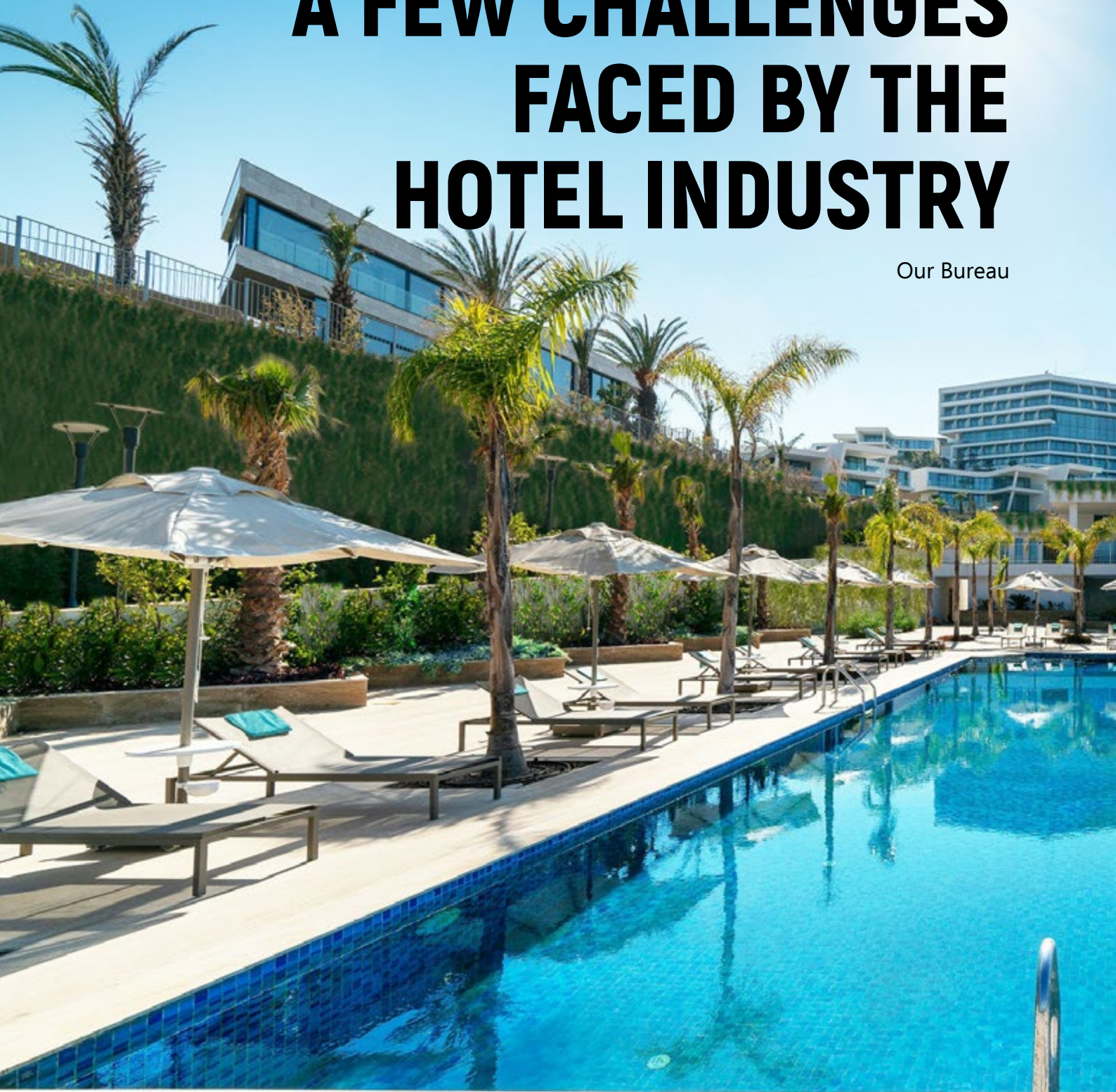
There is a paradigm shift in food consumption from comfort food to healthy dishes and more vegetarian options. The report suggested that 45 percent of young adults will make healthier food choices by 2021. The study has revealed some interesting insights into the parallel side of the industry. Staycation is the new buzzword and has given the industry an alternate source for revenue generation. Staycation & Workation combined will rule 80 percent of the market by 2021. Similarly, drive-in theaters struggling to make a mark in the pre-covid area will see a surge of 12 percent in the coming years.





# A FEW CHALLENGES FACED BY THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

Our Bureau





**T**he hotel segment of the hospitality sector scenario in India stands drastically changed following the spread of Covid-19, which is still lingering. New expectations and new technologies have been evident in the hotel segment over the past year. Demand for hotels and tourism has dramatically transformed. Consumer behavior in hospitality has also changed. Consumer satisfaction has become the primary concern when it comes to hospitality. All these have a significant impact on the management and marketing activities of hotels. There are many challenges that the industry is facing, which in the coming year are expected to become more marked.

Innovative  
technology has  
become

the hallmark of hotels. Electronic check-in is the latest technology being embraced by the industry. While many hotels have found the transformation challenge, other hotels have already implemented the innovation. When clients plan for trips, hotels register the guest and then send key cards that are equipped with the new identification recognition that utilizes frequencies. On arrival, a text message is conveyed to the guest's mobile phone entailing the room number and time, among other details. Once the guest arrives at the hotel, they don't have to confirm at the Front Desk. They can directly move to their room and apply the key-card. For small and other major hotels, using this technology will see their revenues and profits reduce. However, if they don't match the pace made by other hotels, things might turn for worse.

Reputation management is another key area. Hotel reputation is what is reflected in

online reviews, comments, and photos put by the guests on the high ranked social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Yelp, and TripAdvisor. These feedbacks have assumed high relevance in a context when the hospitality industry is battling to establish relationships with guests.

It is a fact that in every sector of the national economy, the key to an effective and efficient economic transaction is a high level of trust maintained between a service provider and the consumer. Online reviews and comments can make or mar or market a hotel's reputation. Till recently, hotels used to engage and respond to the concerns, needs, and requests of clients publicly through old-fashioned forums. With online platforms like Facebook, hotels have started utilizing such platforms to manage their reputation. It's a challenge that the industry is facing and will still







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*An increase in international travel is a factor of high significance for the hotel industry. The number of international travels is growing every year.*  
”

continue to face for some time. Acquisition and retention of talent is another formidable challenge faced by the industry. The success and growth of the hotel sector depend on the state of both national and global economies. This means that maintaining adequate employees having the requisite talent and expertise will be crucial in the coming year. As the industry continues to bulge, retaining and attracting top talents has become a priority. For companies to withstand the competition, they will have to ensure they have employees with top skills. Retaining them has emerged a major challenge. This is in a scenario where, according to statistics, about one-third of workers quit their jobs after working for just six months and about 45 percent of workers manage to hold on for an average of two years.

The industry has realised the imperative significance of devising techniques to retain top skills and talents. They have started focusing on referral-based

hires as a significant method to safeguard such talents, on adopting processes that will see a worker's productivity and morale boosted and on having favorable work schedules, technology, or incentives to motivate employees.

An increase in international travel is a factor of high significance for the hotel industry. The number of international travels is growing every year. It is imperative that the hospitality sector should focus on offering visitors a unique experience for both domestic and foreign visitors. This will be possible only when the staff are aware of different cultures. Hiring workers who can fluently converse in multiple languages, give information, and offer services in diverse languages will be essential. Hotels with such staff will attract foreign clientele. Technology giant Google recently launched earbuds that could assist hotels in tackling this challenge. The wireless headsets can automatically translate 40 languages.

Personalizing client's experience is an issue which has gained



great importance in the present scenario. Travelers have grown to be accustomed to streamlined and personal shopping experiences. This is a wake-up call for hotels. Offering clean and good design services is no longer applicable. The digital age has steered an increased desire for more personalized traveling and lodging experiences. Capitalizing on this trend has been a significant challenge for hotels and the hospitality industry as a whole. Hotels will have to step up and set themselves and seize, providing unique designs and offering locally sourced drinks and food. They have to generate memorable activities and mobilize social media traffic if they want to improve the client experience.

The emergence of companies like Airbnb has altered traveler's expectations, especially when it comes to lodging. Accommodation websites have changed traveler's mindsets from desiring a standard hotel room to a much homier experience. The pricing offered by the company is also a concern for lodges and hotels. In the past years, Airbnb has received a fair share of scandals ranging from robbery and damage of property. Hotels can utilize this opportunity and campaign for security and safety policies in their services to lure travelers.

The need to have loyalty programs is another critical challenge that hotels are facing and will face in the coming year. Catching direct clients has posed problems for hotels. This has led to some big hotel chains battling each other to have the attention of direct clients. This implies that other independent hotels and chains involved should start offering loyalty programs that include discounts and specials.

There are some of the several challenges that the hotel industry is presently facing and that are expected to gain stronger grounds in 2021. At the same, these are the factors that will make the industry reach greater heights and ensure their sustenance through consistent growth.









# TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN RESTAURANTS

N. Vijayagopalan

**T**echnology has always had a strong, positive impact on the restaurant industry. The combination just makes sense. Restaurants want to deliver a flawless, convenient, and enjoyable experience to their customers. Technology offers a means to speed up processes and improve the customer experience, thereby, achieving the goals of the restaurant.

We have seen India's F&B sector undergoing a vast transformation since the pandemic shattered it. As in the case of most other countries, Indian players had to reinvent their business strategies to serve customers and keep themselves running by withstanding the pandemic induced pressures and challenges.

Trends like takeaway and drive-through continued to gain strong grounds due to the restrictions on dining-in. But more importantly, hoteliers had to adopt more technology-based solutions for adapting a newly emerged scenario. From digital menus available with a barcode scan to contactless payment options, restaurants across the country moved to a path of technology based solutions to stay afloat in a fiercely aggressive market.

There are a few trends that have already started to set in or are likely to dominate the food and dining industry this year. They are virtually revolutionising the F&B sector of the country. Let us have a look at the major among them.

Cloud Kitchens are now a dominating trend. Essentially, these rented commercial spaces produce food solely for takeaway purposes. It is a delivery-only model working well due to social distancing rules that are likely to stay for some more

time. They are also known as virtual restaurants or ghost kitchens. These establishments minimise operational costs that come with the hiring of manpower like serving staff and other logistics associated with a full-fledged restaurant.

Then there is the strong emergence of Contactless Delivery Services. The objective behind contactless delivery service is to minimise the volume of physical contact between delivery agents and customers. Restaurants and food delivery apps are continuously expanding these services to cater to the rising demand of hygienic and contact-free delivery options from customers.

Tech-enabled in-restaurant dining experience is another trend getting established. Certain technology tools that were considered a luxury till recently are now becoming a necessity. The emergence of QR codes across restaurants for more contact-less dining experiences is an example. QR codes will play an instrumental role in implementing a contactless menu and digital payments at an F&B establishment. In addition to this, pre-ordering services help diners to cut their wait time at a restaurant and ensure that their food is ready by the time they reach. Further, reservations and waitlist management software will ensure that restaurants are not overcrowding and can adhere to social distancing norms.

Self-ordering Kiosks are becoming a part of the new normal. Large Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) players like McDonalds and KFC have already implemented this service. Kiosks are small standing digital systems that allow customers to place orders themselves without the intervention of a hotel associate. They speed up

service with a significant reduction in time taken for placing orders. Kiosks are versatile systems that enable customers to curate their orders and pay for them via their preferred mode of payment with minimal physical contact.

Healthier Food Choices have become the order of the day. Consumers are now more careful than ever before while making food choices. There is a paradigm shift in food consumption with people shifting from comfort food to healthy foods, for instance, vegetarian meal options. The concept of farm-to-fork is not new, but its acceptance is growing amongst millennials who are consciously avoiding junk food intake. The food service industry will have to continuously innovate their offerings based on changing consumer preferences, which are influenced by health trends and global events like the pandemic.

The pandemic has been acting as a catalyst for a vast transformation in the F&B industry, with customer habits undergoing massive changes and restaurants rushing to cater to them. A recent survey by the agency RTi Research found that of the 31% of consumers who had food delivered to their homes for the first time, 66% said they would keep doing so after the global pandemic. This indicates there could be a permanent behavioural change with respect to people dining and socialising. It also means that restaurants will need to prepare for a different world even after the easing of social distancing restrictions. The adoption of tech-based solutions is certain to make this transition easier for hoteliers and restaurants.



# ICRA expects India's Hospitality Industry to Shrink by 65% in FY21





**I**n a report, rating agency ICRA said it expects the Indian hospitality industry to contract 65 per cent in the financial year 2021, with massive operating and net losses, wiping out the cumulative profits of the four past years. The domestic hospitality industry, which has been severely affected by the COVID-19 related disruptions, is likely to witness a decline of over 65 per cent in 2020-21, according to a report by ICRA. However, a sharp demand recovery is possible in the later part of the financial year 2021-22, as vaccine rollouts gain traction.

Much though will be contingent upon the spread of the pandemic and success of vaccination efforts, the report said. The situation is still evolving, with numerous headwinds as seen with the restart of crowd control and lockdowns, increasing India's COVID cases and globally over the last few weeks, the report added.

The domestic hospitality industry has been one of the worst-hit sectors, severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, which restricted mobility and hotel occupancies in all the major markets, the IcrA report stated. IcrA research observed that pan-India occupancy hit an all-time low of 18-20 per cent in eight months of the financial year 2021, down from 64-65 per cent in the previous year.

The average room rates (ARR)s was at Rs 3,400-3,500 per night, a discount of 35-40 per cent, while the RevPAR declined by about 80 per cent during the period under consideration. Although some sequential improvement has been witnessed since September 2020, recovery is slow and arduous, punctuated by setbacks, it said, adding that this will culminate in a weak financial year 2021.

"We expect FY21 RevPAR to decline by 70-75 per cent pan-

India and close at Rs 900-1,000 per night. It will continue to be impacted by the lockdown, travel restrictions because of the virus spread. "FY22 will see the industry witnessing over 120 per cent growth in revenues and operating margins clawing up to 13-15 per cent supported by pick-up in revenues and some continued benefits of the large-scale cost rationalisation measures undertaken during the pandemic, particularly in staffing," IcrA VP and Sector Head Pavethra Ponniah said.

However, to put these growth numbers in perspective, the optically high growth numbers for financial year 2021-22 will only place the industry on a recovery path to pre-COVID levels in 2-3 years, she said. IcrA expects the recovery to pre-COVID levels in financial year 2023-financial year 2024, she added. Since October 2020, there has been a sequential improvement in occupancy across all the key markets driven by improvement in leisure travel, the report noted.

Pent up leisure demand and the diversion of outbound leisure travel to domestic tourism have been positive for markets like Goa, wedding markets such as Jaipur and Udaipur, driveable leisure destinations such as Coorg Ooty in the South and

parts of Rajasthan, it said.

This apart, staycation or workcations and social MICE filled some rooms, it added. With closed international borders, foreign tourist arrivals are likely to stay muted well into 2021; the report pointed out that in comparison, domestic tourism will recover faster, aided by the diversion of outbound leisure travel to domestic tourism.

Nevertheless, the absence of corporate travel and big-box MICE events will cap recovery for most of the hotels in large cities, it opined. Hotels have enforced sharp cost control in financial year 2021, including a 39 per cent reduction in employees' costs during H1 financial year 21, letting go of contract employees, enforced pay cuts, and mandatory leave encashments.

Overall costs shrank by 54 per cent, while revenues fell by 80 per cent in H1 financial year 2021, it stated, adding that interest costs, however, stayed mostly sticky. In H2 financial year 2021, the industry will witness a sequential growth in revenues while staying profoundly negative at over 60 per cent of previous year levels, the report added.

(Courtesy : ICRA, PTI)





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## Japan's Kikkoman Soy Sauce Brand



Japan's Kikkoman Corporation, a producer of naturally brewed soy sauce, launched Kikkoman India, a wholly-owned subsidiary that will expand its operations in India. With this move, the company aims to become the market leader in the soy sauce and Asian sauces category, within the growing FMCG market in India, as it introduces its naturally brewed 'Honjoso' soy sauce to India. Kikkoman Soy Sauce can be used for all cuisines, including Asian, Western, Japanese, and Indian dishes. It is brewed using 'The Honjoso method' with four ingredients, water, soybeans, wheat and salt. The market entry strategy is to first reach consumers through the hospitality and restaurant sector, starting with a range of Kikkoman Naturally Brewed Soy Sauce. This will be followed by the launch of other soy sauce related seasonings for both the food service and consumer retail markets.

## Prakritii Cultivating Green partners with leading hotel chains to offer eco-friendly disposables



Prakritii Cultivating Green has tied up with bigger hotel chains around India who have now started considering eco-friendly disposables as hotels are now relying on branded eco-friendly disposable companies. The organic dinnerware company is currently working with hotel chains across their location such as Radisson, Hyatt, Taj Exotica, Taj Sats, Ginger Hotels, First Fiddle F&B Pvt Ltd, Social (Impressario Entertainment & Hospitality Pvt Ltd), Imperfecto, Shangri-La and many more. With a pan-India presence, the company is serving more than 50 hotel groups. The pressure on hygiene and paranoia over the spread of the coronavirus is resulting in increased dependence on disposables, such as styrofoam plastic cutlery, cups, containers, carry bags, and garbage bags, and greater consumption of packaged drinking water as a safety measure to avoid contracting Covid-19.

## NuShakti launches home food fortification products in Kerala



NuShakti has launched a range of home food fortifiers in Kerala. The products are formulated with essential vitamins and minerals to meet the nutritional needs of urban and rural consumers who are in pursuit of better nutrition and healthier lifestyles. Introduced in 2019 in Tamil Nadu, the the product range includes powermix for Rice (fortified rice kernels added to regular rice), powermix for Atta (fortifier for atta/flour that is mixed with regular atta) and Mixme (fortified powdered beverage mix available in three flavours). The manufacturers claim the micronutrients present in these products help people have a healthier, diet without altering the taste, smell and appearance of daily foods or changing their dietary habits.

## Mother's Recipe launches spout pack Szechwan chutney



Mother's Recipe has launched its Desi Szechwan chutney 200gm spout pack, which according to the company is a perfect blend of spices made with chillies, ginger, garlic and onions and being adaptable in nature, this could perfectly be paired with samosa, sandwich, Frankie and even momos. The company says this chutney gives an ideal opportunity to experiment with various fusion dishes at home.

## Quaker Oats brings first-of-its-kind- food flavour innovation to India



Quaker India has launched Quaker Oats with Flavour Mix. This brings plain oats with two different flavours - Homestyle Masala and Tangy Tomato – in one pack to offer consumers tasty and convenient ways to consume oats. The company says consumers can now use the delicious 'Homestyle Masala' and 'Tangy Tomato' flavour sachets that come along with their favourite Quaker Oats to whip up a tasty preparation of their choice.



## Radico Khaitan launches 'Triple Eight' whisky in UFlex-Asepto's Foil Stamping pack



Radico Khaitan has launched its whisky brand 'Triple Eight' imbibing Foil Stamping feature, manufactured by UFlex-Asepto. It is the outcome of a packaging partnership between both the companies to elevate the packaging standards for the IMFL category products and embellish the packs to make them aesthetically superior using unique design blends for brand differentiation. It is a premium whisky and to cater to the growing demand in Karnataka it is now made available in 90ml and 180ml sizes.

## Starbucks launches dairy free oat milk



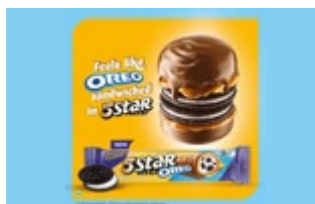
Harnessing the plant-based revolution, Starbucks has launched a new dairy free addition to its menu across outlets in India - Oat Milk. Addition of oats is an extension of the coffee major's already existing variety of plant-based choices such as almond and soy. The company claims this new non-dairy alternative is perfect for plant-based and dairy-conscious consumers.

## Myprotein launches products for fitness enthusiasts in Indian market



Myprotein has launched two new products with the aim of satiating the sweet and tangy cravings and change the snacking game of every fitness freak. Baked with a rich dough and smooth filling, the Goopy Filled Cookie with an irresistibly goopy centre, this sweet delight is low in sugar and high in protein according to the manufacturers. They claim with only five calories per serving, this low-calorie sauce is ideal to liven up healthy lunches and post-workout snacks.

## Mondelez India launches Cadbury 5Star Oreo



Mondelez India has launched Cadbury 5Star Oreo, strengthening their premium snacking portfolio and giving consumers more choice. According to the company this combination of the creaminess and crunchiness of Oreo and the chocolatey caramel zest of Cadbury 5Star is a sandwich in a sandwich, which aims to entice the consumers who are constantly exploring newer eat experiences. The product is layered with chocolate, caramel, Oreo cream and biscuit chunks.

## Coffeeza launches new coffee capsules and coffee machine



Coffeeza launches new coffee capsules and coffee machine. It is focused on paving a modern way to prepare and enjoy great tasting coffee that is convenient and saves time. The machines and capsules allow coffee aficionados to brew caféstyle beverages like Espresso, Cappuccino, Latte and more within seconds in the comfort of their homes and offices, making the daily coffee ritual a breeze. The brand launched 3 new coffee capsules: Cremoso, Forte and Single-Origin Coffee Ethiopia along with the new Finero Next Capsule Coffee Machine.

## Cornitos launches Corn and Wheat Tortilla Wraps



Cornitos has launched Corn and Wheat Tortilla Wraps. Each pack of the Cornitos Corn and Wheat Tortilla Wrap contains 6 pieces of 8 inches tortilla wraps. They are meant to provide alternatives for any meal occasion and to be used in many ways. The manufacturers claim that the Corn and Wheat Tortilla wraps deliver fiber, whole grains, and other nutrients while being lower in fat and calories.

The product can be molded into many versatile snacks with one's choice of ingredients. It can be consumed for breakfast, lunch, or dinner and is customisable as per tastes and meals.



## MM Originals launches 'coconut paste' in India



MM Originals from the house of Mezhukkattil Mills has launched its product 'coconut paste' for the first time in India. With the launch the company is stepping into the B2C segment under the brand name 'MM Originals' after successfully catering to over 22 global brands in the B2B segment. The manufacturers claim the ready to use product opens up innumerable possibilities of including coconut in your diet in the most convenient and hassle-free manner. They say the product is a paste form of coconut made with virgin coconut and can be used to replace the usage of coconut sans the chores in the form of grate, grind, or milk and even in the roasted form in the recipes. Two variants of the product, plain and roasted coconut paste are made available.

## William Lawson's forays into premium scotch whisky with William Lawson's 13



William Lawson's scotch whisky has launched its 13-Year old Scotch whisky variant, exclusively in Telangana, which is one of the biggest scotch whisky markets in India and one of the key markets for the brand. The launch marks the brand's entry in the premium scotch category. Currently, the variant is available in premium retail and on trade outlets. According to the company, William Lawson's 13 is a rich variant which strongly embodies the brand's 'No Rules' philosophy and enables a scotch whisky experience free of the dram's usual norms and traditions.

## Heritage Foods forays into cheese products and Fresh Cream in attractive packs



Heritage Foods has forayed into cheese products with the launch of Mozzarella Cheese, Processed Cheese, besides Cool Cafe and Fresh Cream. The manufacturers claim the cheese is made from 100 per cent pure cow milk and has delicious taste, rich aroma and smooth body which melts in the mouth and that it is imbued with naturally developed cheesy flavour for the consumption of all age group people. They further claim it is also a good source of Vitamin A and other minerals and is rich in easily digestible protein and Calcium besides having a decent amount of phosphorous which helps in digestion.

## Chai Point launches a premium instant chai range available in a variety of flavours



Chai Point has launched instant chai in three flavours - Masala, Ginger and Cardamom. The instant chai will be available in convenient sachets. According to the manufacturers, this is a 100 per cent natural zero preservative product, where actual tea and spice extracts are mixed with the highest quality dehydrated milk in the state of the art German machines to give a truly authentic chai experience and that the product has no added sugar.

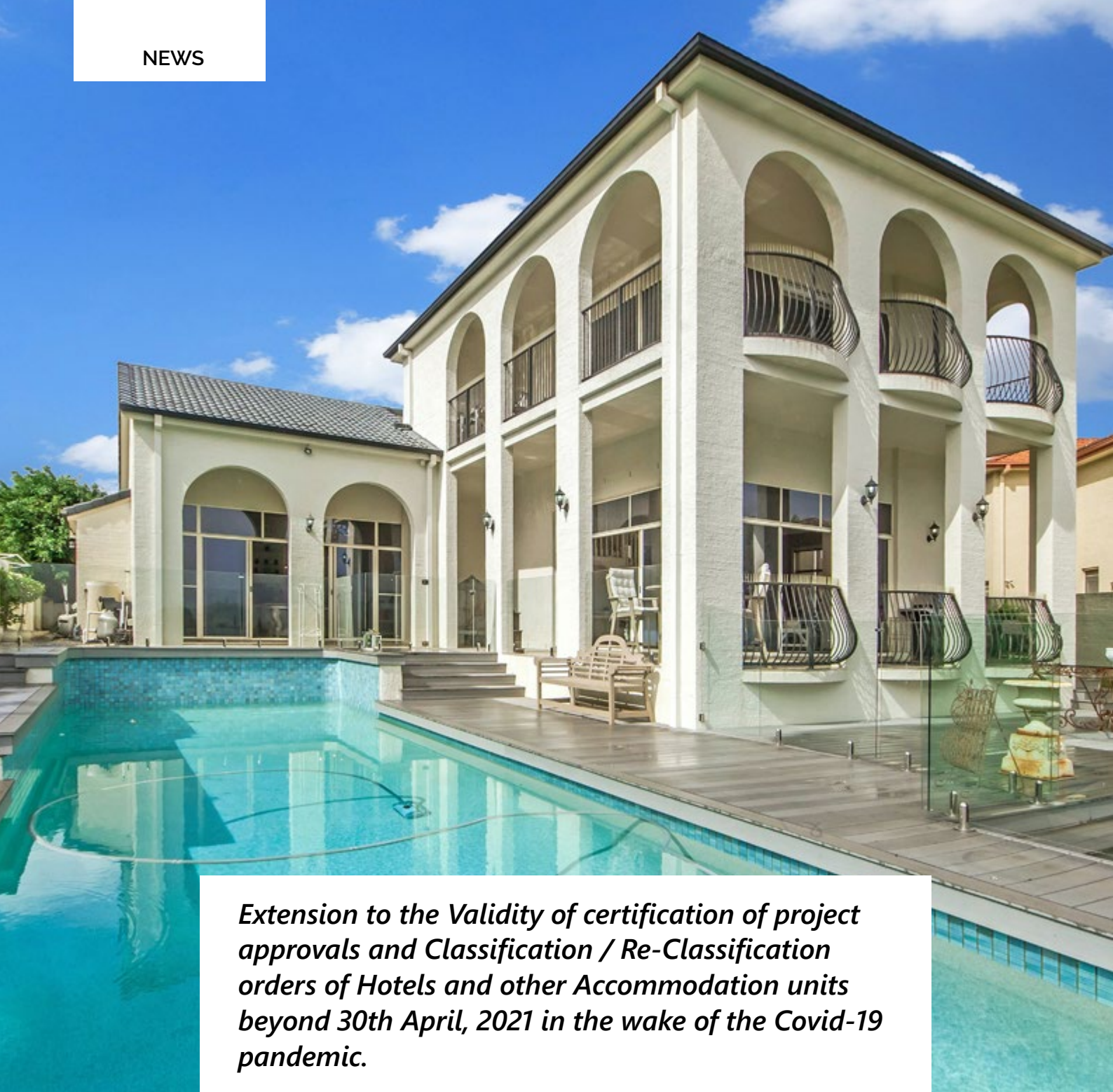
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**HRA Today**  
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION (WESTERN INDIA)

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***Extension to the Validity of certification of project approvals and Classification / Re-Classification orders of Hotels and other Accommodation units beyond 30th April, 2021 in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.***

## **Message from Hotel & Restaurant Association Western India**



The validity of certification/approval/classification/re-classification orders of hotels and other accommodation units approved by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India pursuant to current covid-19 situation whose validity is/was to expire/cease on or before the period (24.03.2020 to 30.04.2021) stands extended.

It has been decided with the approval of competent authority to extend such approval till 30.09.2021 of all

the Hotels and Accommodation units such as Motels, Apartment Hotels, IIB&B/Homestay Units, Convention Centres, Guest Houses, Timeshare Resorts, Standalone Air Catering Units, Standalone Restaurants, etc. whose validity has expired /likely to expire in this intervening period (i.e. 24.03.2020 to 30.04.2021).

All members are requested to note the above extension.

## Prakritii Cultivating Green partners with leading hotel chains to offer eco-friendly disposables



Prakritii Cultivating Green has tied up with bigger hotel chains around India who have now started considering eco-friendly disposables as key ingredients to their success going forward. The ongoing pandemic has given leverage to the brand as hotels are now trusting branded eco-friendly disposable companies as compared to common mom and pop stores. The organic dinnerware company is currently working with hotel chains across their location such as Radisson, Hyatt, Taj Exotica, Taj Sats, Ginger

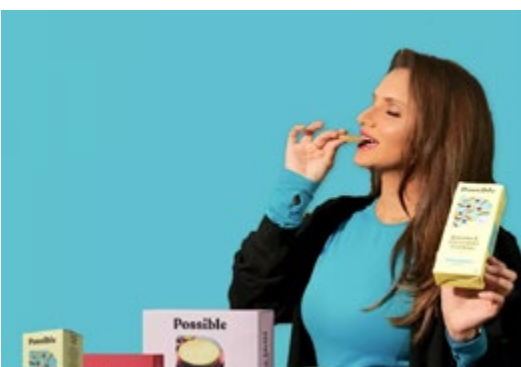
Hotels, First Fiddle F&B Pvt Ltd, Social (Impressario Entertainment & Hospitality Pvt Ltd), Imperfecto, Shangri-La and many more. With a pan-India presence, the company is serving more than 50 hotel groups.

The pressure on hygiene and paranoia over the spread of the coronavirus is slowly leading to a reversal of the central government's push to phase out single-use plastic. The dependence on disposables, such as styrofoam plastic cutlery, cups,

containers, carry bags, and garbage bags, and greater consumption of packaged drinking water as a safety measure to avoid contracting Covid-19 are gaining momentum. The hotel chains have taken a step forward to eliminate plastic from their property and are aggressively vouching for eco-friendly and biodegradable disposables. One of the trends that the hospitality industry is following post-Covid-19 is that of takeaways instead of Dine-in. Besides, they have also started using disposables for dine-in too, keeping in mind hygiene and safety, which in a way have resulted in elimination of reusable dinnerware trend.

Prakritii helps the hotel chains to reduce styrofoam plastic and have developed more than 100 design variations which have increased the utility of these plates. The products are being used for packaging dry fruits, chocolates, vegetables, etc giving it an aesthetic look. They have been making waves with their dinnerware made with Arecanut Sheaths (leaf extensions) naturally shed from Areca (Palm) trees and are widely acclaimed in countries like Germany, Sweden, France, USA, Canada, Australia, Eastern Europe countries and a few more to count.

## Sania Mirza is brand ambassador for Possible's signature food range



Healthcare brand, Possible, has selected Sania Mirza as its brand ambassador as it readies to unveil its signature breakfast and snack box collection. The company aims to make Indians more nutrition-literate, with customised health supervision, personal coaches and healthy diets. It will teach them the psychology of food and nutrition to help them maintain healthier lifestyles. This ties in well with the life philosophy of

professional tennis player Sania Mirza, who believes in a balanced approach to healthy living. According to the company sources, this partnership is a conscious step towards the company's mission to help individuals live a disease-free life using food as medium. The brand recently raised INR 5 crore from Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, as part of its larger funding round. It is expanding its product base as well as geographical reach.



# About 60%-70% of Mumbai's restaurants have reopened, which are operating at 50% capacity: HRAWI

In the second week of March 2021, Maharashtra's Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said he doesn't want to impose a lockdown in the state but "helplessness is also something". He made this remark as the state has been reporting over 8,000 daily COVID-19 cases for the last few days.

Since January 2021, Maharashtra crossed the 6,000-mark after a lull of three months. Mr. Thackeray said that he would be compelled to announce a lockdown, if the growth of COVID-19 cases was not reduced within two weeks; especially in light of daily cases crossing the 8,000-mark last week. This news has expectedly disheartened the state's hospitality segment. According to Mr. Sherry

Bhatia, President of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI), there are around 210,000 restaurants in Maharashtra. Of this approximately 30% continue to remain shut due to debts and financial losses they accrued as a result of the pandemic induced lockdowns.

It is well-known that the hospitality industry, which is undergoing the most trying periods in recent times, is attempting to recover from last year's losses. With news about a spike in COVID-19 cases, restaurants already in the state have witnessed around 30% drop in the customer footfalls. Initially, there was a spurt in demand or footfalls, but it soon fizzled out.

Restaurants are currently operating at 50% capacity. Also, across the State, the timing for taking the last order is staggered. While it is 1AM in Mumbai, in certain cities it varies from 9PM to 11PM. In some districts, it is also 5 PM! Moreover, the timing restrictions are changed almost every month. For hotels and restaurants, this uncertainty causes loss of opportunity.

Business for most F&B establishments is still around 35%-40% of pre-pandemic levels in the state. Almost 30% restaurants have not re-opened for business. A significant number of these will most probably shut permanently, if they don't re-open by the March-end.

## FHRAI initiates #GoDirect campaign

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has initiated #GoDirect campaign requesting patrons to book their hotel stays - #BookDirect or order their food by contacting the restaurants directly - #OrderDirect. For over eight months, the Hospitality industry experienced its worst times and several hotels and restaurants closed. The industry has appealed to customers to support their favorite restaurants and hotels by eliminating the intermediaries and reduce the burden of exorbitant commissions levied by the online travel aggregators (OTAs) and the food service aggregators (FSAs).

The #GoDirect campaign will be supported by member hotel and restaurant establishments of the FHRAI and its regional Associations - Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI), Hotel and Restaurant Association of Northern India (HRANI), Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) and South India Hotels

and Restaurants Association (SIHRA).

"The Hospitality industry is on the brink of collapse and needs urgent support. It is not just for the sake of businesses in the industry but also for the millions of people who are employed by it. Hotels and restaurants account for 35 million or around 12.5 per cent of the total employment generated in the country and supports jobs directly and indirectly across India. There is acute need for hospitality businesses to generate revenues. Businesses of OTAs and FSAs are directly dependent on hotels and restaurants and if hotels and restaurants don't survive, the OTAs and the FSAs won't survive either. #GoDirect is aimed at salvaging from what we have. For every order or



booking made through the FSAs or OTAs, we lose anywhere between 20 to 30 per cent as commission. We request our patrons to directly visit the websites of hotels or restaurants for booking rooms - #BookDirect or for ordering food - #OrderDirect. Even if customers do switch to this practice temporarily for the next few months, it will help the Hospitality industry immensely," says Mr Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, FHRAI.

# FHRAI requests FM to increase the threshold limit for zero GST for hotel room tariffs



FHRAI has written to the Finance Minister - Nirmala Sitharaman to enhance the threshold limit for zero GST for hotel room tariffs from the present INR 1000/- to INR 2000/- per room per day. The Association has stated that the move will boost stays in the lower budget segment, which in turn will encourage more

domestic travellers to venture out and thereby give tourism sector the much required boost. Increasing the threshold limit on zero GST will give hotels a chance to attract more tourists, thus increasing the chance of generating slightly better revenues. This could result in a multiplier effect for the Hospitality as well as the tourism industry.

There are quite a few budget hotels that offer accommodations in the INR 2000/- tariff per day per room.

Increasing the present zero GST threshold to INR 2000/- will give these budget hotels a chance to revive business. The hospitality sector is engulfed in massive losses and mounting debts due to the pandemic and it is dealing with a very gloomy economic situation with no respite in near sight. This move will boost the lower budget hotel segment,

which will encourage more domestic travellers to take vacations, aiding the tourism sector.

FHRAI in its pre-Budget memorandum had also requested for increasing the threshold limit of hotel room tariff charged at 18 per cent GST to be raised to INR 9500/- from INR 7500/-. The Hospitality sector is dealing with a very gloomy economic situation with no foreseeable respite. Being the first sector affected by COVID-19 and the last to revive, the Hospitality sector in the country is waging a battle for its existence. This unprecedented crisis has destroyed the entire Hospitality eco-system in the country which would take many years to recover. Therefore, only some extraordinary measures and support from the Government can save the industry at this time of deep crisis.

## FHRAI seeks meeting with Hon'ble Prime Minister



After being completely ignored in the latest Union Budget 2021, the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has written to the Hon'ble Prime Minister – Shri Narendra Modi expressing disappointment and has sought his meeting. The apex Hospitality Association has conveyed dismay and disappointment on the gross neglect shown to the Hospitality

sector in the Budget. The FHRAI has stated its disbelief on the 19 per cent retrenchment in the budget allocation for the Ministry of Tourism at a time when the sector is facing the worst crisis for tourism. In the absence of a sector-specific stimulus package, at least 30 to 40 per cent restaurants and 20 to 30 per cent hotels in the country are facing imminent shut down of business, resulting into

millions of job losses.

"We are really disheartened to see that tourism and hospitality - the biggest casualty of the COVID19 pandemic have been continuously ignored by the Government ever since the pandemic hit the country. It did not even find a mention in the Budget presented by the Finance Minister. The FHRAI has been vociferously

advocating for some real relief measures to help the sector come out of the biggest crisis. Despite our numerous representations over the last ten months and multiple meetings with the highest echelons in the Government, the Hospitality sector has been blatantly ignored. The Hon'ble Prime Minister has always been a strong proponent of India's tourism potential. We are hoping that he will understand and offer a remedy for the industry's concerns for which we have sought a meeting with him," says Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, FHRAI.

As per a recent report, the full year occupancy of the hotels in the country in the year 2020 was at 34.5 per cent and occupancy during the pandemic period was at 27.8 per cent. Several key markets reported pandemic period Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR in Rupees) in the 100s with Ahmedabad at the bottom with RevPAR at Rs.672/-.



# FHRAI writes to Government, requests recognition for hospitality workers as 'Frontline Corona Warriors'

FHRAI has written to the Home Minister, Amit Shah and Dr Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Health & Family Welfare, requesting due recognition of Hospitality workers in the country as 'Frontline Corona Warriors' and be nominated for priority vaccination. In its letter, the Association has informed the Government about its commitment and sense of responsibility towards the nation and its citizens when the COVID19 pandemic hit the country. The FHRAI has stated that hotels and restaurants across the country provided their support to the Government by offering rooms for housing quarantined passengers, doctors, health workers and the police, among others while restaurants served over 3 lakh meals per day to the needy.

The Hospitality industry came forward to assist the Government in its hour of need. Hoteliers, restaurateurs and more importantly, the people working in hotels and restaurants continued to serve the public during the worst phase of the pandemic. While the industry was bleeding every day on account of the lockdown, hotels and restaurants unflinchingly continued to serve the needy. Hotel employees continue to come in contact with quarantined passengers and with persons kept in isolation. We therefore request the Government of India to take cognizance of these noble and invaluable efforts made by the Hospitality Workers. Vaccinating the Hospitality workforce will instil confidence in guests and also it will give boost to the business. We ask the Government that it treats Hospitality professionals too as frontline Corona Warriors and nominates them for priority inoculation for COVID19," says Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, FHRAI.



During the lockdown, the hospitality industry offered its hotel rooms for housing quarantined passengers, doctors, medical workers, police and municipal workers, among others. Many restaurants threw opened kitchens to prepare and distribute meals for all needy in excess of 3 lakhs meals a day.

Along with its significant contribution to the economy in the form of around 10 per cent of the nation's GDP, supporting around 87 million jobs, the Tourism and Hospitality sector is also known for its Social Responsibility endeavours. The hospitality workers of the country risked their lives during the pandemic and while the advent of Coronavirus vaccine has brought a lot of confidence and optimism to the Hospitality sector, there is no sign from the Government about rewarding this sector that played such a critical role during the worst time of the pandemic.

"Owing to the nature of work

and selfless services rendered to the society and the country during the pandemic, people employed in the hospitality industry should be recognized as COVID Warriors and be made eligible for priority vaccination. This small gesture from the Government will go a long way in invigorating our industry and our workers, and will also be a great support in our efforts to come out of the painful memories of the pandemic," concludes Mr. Kohli.



# Maharashtra government and BMC give cold shoulder to hospitality industry

Mumbai hotels and restaurant owners are unhappy with the Maharashtra government and Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for not fulfilling their demands made in a bid to revive the sector. Though the corporation had used hotels during the lockdown to accommodate COVID-19 warriors and for quarantine purposes and the sector had supported the move, but as agreed, several of them have not been paid properly for their services.

One of the aggrieved hoteliers Paramjit Singh Ghai, the managing partner of Hotel Samrat in Khar, said that BMC has been giving them a cold shoulder. "BMC has paid the accommodation bills of hotels similar to what they paid for using open grounds and schools, amongst others, which is incorrect. Moreover, now, the state government wants us to pay excise duty on/before March 31 for this financial year. Since we are operating at 50 per cent capacity, a discount should be offered in the payment, including the installment facility. Also, BMC had promised a

concession on property tax. However, concerned civic ward officers have not been told. Therefore, we are facing a lot of financial crises." The state Excise Department, on Wednesday, has issued a notice to the hospitality industry to renew the license, failing which the license is set for cancellation.

Several hoteliers and restaurant owners also expressed disappointment over BMC's surprise raids to check whether COVID-19 protocols are being followed. Mr. Ghai questioned how patrons are expected to wear a mask while having food and drinks? "The civic officials visit restaurants and hotels, shoot a video and impose a fine of Rs 30,000. It seems that they believe our hotel industry is earning huge profit, which is not the case. They should understand that already we are operating at 50 per cent of the capacity. Now, taking such action is ruining our business further."

Reportedly, BMC, as per the fresh COVID-19 prevention guidelines,

has been conducting raids in hotels, restaurants and function halls. It had also lodged a First Information Report (FIR) and imposed fines against a few for violating the norms. Commenting on the grievances raised, Pradeep Shetty, senior vice president of Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) stated, "Some relief has come our way and we are appreciative of it. However, many issues are still pending, like instalment and discount on excise duty fees in lieu of the stringent restrictions continuing on our industry, waiver of property tax, and payment to hoteliers who had helped the government at the time of lockdown."

Reportedly, amidst the lockdown, over 3,000 hotel rooms were taken over by BMC for essential staffers in Mumbai on a no profit and loss basis. A committee was also set up, wherein it was decided that hoteliers will be paid as per their star ratings. However, the corporation has not fulfilled the promise as agreed and only a meagre amount was paid that disappoints hoteliers.

## FSSAI certifies Taj Resorts, North Goa as 'Eat Right Campus'

The importance of health and stronger immunity has never been more prevalent than it is today. In a continuous effort to ensure the health and well-being of guests and associates, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa and Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa were recently certified as 'Eat Right Campus' as per guidelines established by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

The 'Eat Right Campus' initiative led by FSSAI aims to promote safe, healthy and sustainable food in campuses such as schools, universities, colleges, workplaces,

hospitals, tea estates across the country. As a part of Eat Right India, the initiative is focused towards improving the health of people and promoting social and economic development of the nation. As part of the evaluation criteria, the resorts had to adhere to a checklist outlining the best practices to be followed, based on four parameters - food safety measures, steps to ensure provision of healthy and environmentally sustainable food and building awareness among the associates in the resort to make the right food choices. These practices include mandatory steps such as licensing

and registration of food service providers in the resort and compliance to food safety and hygiene standards as per Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, 2006; followed by an audit conducted by the FSSAI empaneled agency. Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa and Taj Holiday Resort & Spa were rated with five stars in the audit.

In addition, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa and Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa were rewarded with a high score for the annual FSSAI Mandate Third party audit and Hygiene Rating recently conducted.



# Leela to open up three more properties in 2021



The Leela Palaces and Hotels is going to be having a very busy 2021. In a function recently held at The Leela Palace New Delhi in the capital's Chanakyapuri area, Mr. Anuraag Bhatnagar Chief Operating Officer The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts announced that The Leela Palace Jaipur was already open. The three new properties slated to open this year for Leela, starting with The Leela Gandhinagar, The Leela Bhartiya City

Bengaluru and The Leela Hyderabad. All three properties are business hotels.

The Leela Palace Jaipur, which was formerly a Marriott hotel, reopened in February and has been performing exceptionally well in the wedding and social market. While the Jaipur hotel has 200 keys, The Leela Gandhinagar—slated to open its doors in April 2021—has 318 keys;

The Leela Bhartiya City Bengaluru has 282 keys; and The Leela Hyderabad has 157 keys. The recent opening of The Leela Palace Jaipur and the traction it has gained within a short period of time has shown as to how the brand resonates with today's luxury traveller and we are committed to further strengthening our positioning as an epitome of true Indian luxury.

## Taj to expand footprint in Mumbai, rebuild Sea Rock



Pinning hopes on a strong post-pandemic recovery, Tata Group's Taj Hotels is charting a careful growth path and feels that the mega metro regions of Delhi and Mumbai could have at least 25 properties each

a 371-room flagship Ginger — its "lean lux" brand. "The flagship Ginger will be ready in 20 months and the cost of construction is about Rs 200 crore. It is also drawing up plans to build a new hotel on the city's

across its brands. It currently has over 15 properties in Delhi NCR and over 10 in Mumbai.

In Mumbai, Taj parent Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) has begun demolishing its old flight kitchen near the airport's Terminal 2 to make way for

once-glamorous Sea Rock Hotel. During the pandemic last year, IHCL had raised its stake from 75% to 100%. The hotel, remembered by old-timers for its rooftop revolving restaurant, was demolished in 2009 when the Bandra Worli sea link had opened. There is a road between Sea Rock and Taj Lands End that leads to Bandra Fort. Once they redevelop it, the view of the sea will remain uninterrupted. They are drawing up plans for Sea Rock and will propose a small bridge to link the two properties. Once complete with the rebuilt Sea Rock and the bridge, this area can be a landmark for this part of Mumbai.

IHCL currently has 215 hotels across the world, with 165 operational and 50 being developed. Of the 50 properties in the pipeline, 47 are located in India.

# The hospitality sector- post pandemic and its reverberations

The Covid-19 pandemic had people cooped up inside their houses while the nation remained under lockdown for more than six months. Businesses were shut and going out to dine or travel seemed like a thing of the past. However, now that things are moving back to the normalcy and vaccine drive initiated across the globe, the need of the moment is a plan of action for the future. The hospitality sector, and most other sectors included, have been almost entirely inactive during the lockdown period and even post that. Restaurants have shut down and hotels were empty, other than a few of them who already might have some guests locked in because of the pandemic. Some restaurants were able to function by taking out and delivering services while maintaining social distancing norms. Some hotels, on the other hand, were converted to quarantine centers on government orders. While this was the reality of the hospitality sector, we could also incorporate such aspects for their sustainability in the aftermath of this worldwide pandemic that has left humans extremely sensitive.

Now, when the phase of lockdown has passed, delivery and takeout services constitute one of the major revenue points of restaurants as people are still apprehensive about

dining in even after normalcy has been restored. Going by the directions of the Government and Health experts, for dining in, the restaurants have minimized the furniture use and started providing as much space as possible between tables. Fewer tables are now laid out allowing social distancing norms to be followed strictly. The employees now mandatorily go for temperature checks and adhere to proper hygiene protocols to stay medically fit and are trained to ensure to convey assurances to the Guests. The provision of sanitizers has been made compulsory at every entry point not only in restaurants but also in hotels. The employees now follow all necessary precautions such as gloves while serving and cooking, etc. This has provided not only the Guests but also the employee's assurance of safety. Hospitality is now looking to slowly start rolling out more tables once the vaccination drive gets into the top gear and fear of the pandemic lifts from the minds of the public.

Hotels have invested hugely in technology to sustain the inflow of people and in turn, revenue. Automated entry systems, technology-based sanitization, automatic light systems, cleaning robots, and other such advanced technological measures have been installed and fully functional

in every corner of the country. This has ensured a touch-free experience and interaction. All social distancing norms are being followed by the hotels too, especially in gyms, and other communal facilities. Following all of these measures have given the public a sense of assurance and the fear has started dissolving. The technological innovations are also taken up by restaurants that can afford to invest in them. Slowly and steadily, the hospitality sector is coming back to normal however this time with a safer and more hygienic experience.

Considering the disappointment of people for being quarantined at home because of this awful pandemic, they have been flocking restaurants and hotels as their minds are getting eased steadily. Restaurants are busier than ever and hotels, especially the ones outside the cities are booked to the brim. People miss the daily urgent flow that life had before the pandemic swept all of them inside homes with no social interactions. There is a lot of hope for the hospitality sector to prosper in the year 2021. Therefore, the industry is charting out a plan to recover fast and is looking at the brighter side of things.





# Hyatt plans to expand its brand footprint in India



Hyatt Hotels Corporation has announced its plans to grow its brand footprint in India, which is one of their top three growth markets globally, by more than 70% by 2023. With over 20 executed managed and franchised agreements, Hyatt plans to add over 3,600 keys to its existing portfolio of 32 Hyatt-branded hotels across eight distinct brands in the country, namely Andaz, Alila, Park Hyatt, Grand Hyatt, Hyatt Regency, Hyatt, Hyatt Centric and Hyatt Place brands.

The company attributes this ambitious growth in India to an ever-increasing demand from guests, World of Hyatt members, customers, and owners to offer unique and differentiated hotel experiences. This announcement signals significant intentional growth plans for Hyatt, bringing the number of Hyatt-branded hotels in India to more than 50 by the end of 2023, resulting in a more diverse portfolio of hotel offerings in new and existing markets.

In 2021, Hyatt plans to primarily expand its Hyatt Regency and Hyatt Place brands. The Hyatt Regency brand, which continues to drive Hyatt's brand growth in India, will enter two new markets with Hyatt Regency Jaipur Mansoravar and Hyatt Regency Trivandrum. The Hyatt Place brand will enter four new markets with Hyatt Place Bodh Gaya, Hyatt Place Jaipur Malviya Nagar, Hyatt Place Vadodara and Hyatt Place Bharuch.

## FHRAI- HRAWI urges CM to relax curfew timing for restaurants; also appeals for urgent facilitative measures for the industry

India's apex Hospitality Association - Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) along with its regional Association representing Western India - Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) have written to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra requesting for urgent facilitative measures for the Hospitality sector in the form of waiver of statutory payments including excise license fees and property tax, among other along with relaxation of curfew timing for restaurants.

The Associations have stated that actual business for a restaurant starts after 8 pm and a night curfew imposition from 8 pm is tantamount to closure of business. Due to the prevailing restrictions and WFH arrangements, restaurants have no significant business in the day. The FHRAI and HRAWI have also pointed out that all other businesses and sectors are entitled to get long business hours even under restricted timelines but restaurants are being singled out due to its specific nature of business and demand.

The initiative is against the scenario of the industry having drastically lost its business after the lockdown came into effect, 30 per cent of hotels and restaurants in the country having shut down permanently due to financial losses as of now, over 20 per cent of hotels and restaurants not opened fully after the lockdown and the remaining 50 per cent continuing to run in losses, and revenues dipping to below 50 per cent of the pre-COVID levels.

# IHG Hotels & Resorts gears up for wedding season with limited period special offer

In a bid to make dream weddings come true, IHG Hotels & Resorts has come up with a few special offers to help couples make the most of this momentous occasion in their lives when they are ready to say yes. IHG Hotels & Resorts select venues across brands including InterContinental, Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn hotels in India, Nepal and Bangladesh have adapted to create bespoke experiences, making them a perfect match for couples looking to host intimate wedding events.

IHG's team has customised their venues and services to cater to glamorous or one-of-a-kind events with focus on health and safety so



guests can enjoy the celebratory event, leaving every worry behind. The company has put together a

special offer available from 1 March until 30 April 2021, for weddings scheduled from 1 May 2021.

## House of Mandarin opens its newest restaurant at Sheraton Grand Hotel, Bund Garden Road in Pune



With the success of two restaurants in Mumbai, House of Mandarin, the upscale-chic Oriental restaurant, has ventured beyond the boundaries of the city to bring its hospitality to Pune. House of Mandarin has opened its newest restaurant at Sheraton Grand Hotel, Bund Garden Road in Pune. The restaurant offers an extensive menu of Chinese and Japanese cuisine.

House of Mandarin, Sheraton has been designed by the versatile

Minnie Bhatt. The architecture is based on the founders' vision to include unconventional aesthetic elements inspired by elements of Indo-Chinese heritage. The design highlights the central area with Chinese umbrella lights and ribbed concrete columns on the periphery. Inspired by the Chinese architecture in a contemporary fashion, the interiors keep the deep jewel colours of Chinese textile at its core.

## Biryani By Kilo opens its first delivery outlet in South Mumbai



Biryani by Kilo launched its 1st delivery outlet in South Mumbai in Lower Parel. This newly launched outlet is set to deliver Dum cooked Handi Biryani to South Mumbai. Biryani by Kilo which started its first delivery kitchen in Mumbai in 2018 currently has 7 outlets across Mumbai at Andheri, Chembur, Powai, Malad, Khar, Thane & Lower Parel.

BBK has been serving Hyderabad, Kolkata and Lucknowi dum-cooked biryani in the traditional way. BBK claims that their USP is to make fresh Handi Biryani for every individual order and deliver the same Handi to the customer in which Biryani is Dum cooked and that USP not only ensures safety and hygiene but also freshness & great flavors besides being eco-friendly.



# Lemon Tree Premier, City Center, Pune receives I.G.B.C. New Buildings Gold Certification



Lemon Tree Premier received the Gold Certification by the Indian Green Building Council (I.G.B.C.) for this city center hotel in Pune. The hotel

has been designed based on I.G.B.C. standards which bring together a host of sustainable practices and solutions to reduce the environmental impact of

buildings. Lemon Tree uses green building design as an integrated approach while designing its hotels, and it considers the life cycle impact of resources used.

This city center hotel in Pune offers 201 plush and well-appointed rooms and suites, a 24x7 multi-cuisine coffee shop – Citrus Café complemented by a show kitchen, a hip recreation bar – Slounge, an eclectic pan-Asian restaurant – Republic of Noodles besides a rejuvenating spa - Fresco, a Life Fitness gym and an outdoor swimming pool. The hotel also provides over 7,000 sq. ft. of modern banquet space, including large conference rooms and an open business center.

## Almost 65% Indians intend to travel for leisure and explore new destinations in 2021



InterMiles, published results of their second travel survey in the 'Consumer Sentiment Index Report (Travel) 2.0'. Based on responses received from over 11,500 InterMilers across India in January 2021, the report showcases insights and changing consumption patterns of the evolved Indian traveller.

According to the report, leisure travel leads the way in 2021, with close to 65 per cent respondents craving to travel

and break away from monotony as they explore new places. While 2020 witnessed the rise of the essential traveller, the new and evolved 2021 Indian traveller is looking for adventure and is keen on exploring new destinations, in an attempt to leave behind the monotony of 2020. The roll-out of vaccines and pragmatic innovations across the travel chain seem to have contributed to this increase in consumer confidence. Almost 65 per cent

Indians have shown intent to travel for leisure and adventure in 2021.

After spending almost a year distancing socially, 54 per cent Indians say they want to travel to meet family and friends. Business and corporate travel, which was anticipated to be one of the first segments to recover, is surprisingly third on the list of traveller priorities. However, business travel is anticipated to pick-up through the course of the year, with 85 per cent consumers in favor of considering business / work travel in 2021.

The workcation trend is also picking up steam in India with travellers looking for a change of scenery as they fulfill their work obligations. Armed with their laptops and the internet, these digital nomads are more likely to stay away from touristy locations, and head to offbeat places. Mirroring and supporting this trend, India is already seeing the advent of several backpacking hostels, budget-friendly work-centric rentals, campervans and workation packages.

# Occupancy at business hotels to see ramp-up from March-April 2021



The hotels and travel trade expects occupancies in business hotels to ramp up from March-April 2021 onwards as companies gradually lift travel embargo. Furthermore, domestic leisure travel is also expected to continue to drive occupancies across the country and food and beverage (F&B) demand will continue to grow as eating out increases, albeit cautiously. The industry is seeing signs of domestic

business travel pick up in the new year and expects occupancies in hotels to come around March-April 2021 onwards, with companies gradually lifting travel embargo. It also expects investment activity to restart with serious investors evaluating quality assets on the back of performance cycle uptick.

The hospitality industry witnessed a decline of 54.9 per cent in revenue per available room (RevPAR) during January to December (CY 2020) compared to CY 2019. With the revival of domestic travel, emergence of recovery indicators has come to the rescue of the sector. The recovery of the sector has been primarily driven by leisure 'revenge travel' during weekends, festival season, weddings and demand for F&B.

On hotel room inventory, the total number of signings in Q4 2020 stood at 45 hotels comprising 4,326 keys, recording a decline of 43.6 per cent, compared to the same period last year. International operators dominated signings over domestic operators with a ratio of 57:43 in terms of inventory volume.

Goa grew to be the RevPAR leader in absolute terms, despite a decline of RevPAR by 33.3 per cent in Q4 2020. Demand for domestic leisure travel amidst international travel restrictions made Goa the fastest recovering market in absolute terms. Bengaluru saw the sharpest decline of 77 per cent in RevPAR in Q4 2020 compared to the same period previous year.

## HRAWI requests the Government to waiver all statutory fees and taxes



On account of the new 'Break The Chain' guidelines, the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) requested the Government to compensate employees engaged in the industry

and their families for the loss of income, and also support hoteliers and restaurateurs by waiving off all statutory fees, taxes and utility bills. HRAWI observed that even after one year, the Hospitality

industry has not received any relief from the Government and of the approximately 30 lakh employees engaged in the industry directly in the State, 40 per cent have faced job loss and the figures are only increasing. Many employees, who have just returned from their homes, will have to be compensated to ensure that their families are not made to suffer all over again. There is no way that the industry can survive another lockdown.

The HRAWI has stated that the Maharashtra Government's latest 'Break The Chain' order is equivalent to another complete lockdown. Maharashtra has around 10,500 hotels and 210,000 restaurants. The Hospitality industry especially, the small and medium hotels and eateries are in deep financial trouble. The HRAWI has warned that without Government's intervention and support, the industry is staring at a disaster.





## FHIN Team

**Wed, 2 – Fri, 4 Jun**

Bombay Exhibition Centre, NESCO, Goregaon, Mumbai, Maharashtra

FHIn - FOOD & HOTEL INDIA 2021 is a leading trade show and exhibition for food and hospitality industry.

## Express Food & Hospitality, Goa

**Fri, 30 Jul – Sun, 1 Aug**

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium - Head Office SAG, Goa University, Taleigao, Goa

Express Food & Hospitality, Goa event will bring together a mix of buyers from across India, offering Indian and international brands a wide spectrum of opportunities for business networking and partnerships with established players and buyers in the Indian markets.

## MICE India and Luxury Travel Congress

**Wed, 28 – Thu, 29 Jul**

Mumbai, Mumbai, Maharashtra

The MILT Congress is a platform that provides the opportunity to industry leaders who represent India's top corporations, prominent associations, biggest film production houses etc.

# APPOINTMENTS



**Amit Gera**

General Manager  
Operations  
Sayaji Hotels

An alumnus of IHM Shimla, prior to this, Amit Gera was associated with Hilton Chennai as Director of Operations and has previously worked with brands like Oberoi Cecil Shimla, Marriott Mumbai, Taj Fort Aguada (Goa), Leela Palace Bangalore, Sheraton Bangalore, Radisson Blu Jaipur, Crowne Plaza Ahmedabad and Hilton Bangalore.



**Aditi Pal Novotel**

Director of Sales &  
Marketing  
Novotel Ahmedabad

Aditi Pal comes with 16 years of combined experience in operations and over a decade in hotel sales from India & the United Kingdom. She was the Director of Sales at Renaissance Ahmedabad before joining Accor. Pal began her career in the UK and later moved to India in 2010. This is her first project as a Director of Sales & Marketing. She has worked with internationally renowned brands such as Best Western, Principal Hayley group, IHG, Carlson and an earlier stint at Novotel Hyderabad Convention centre.



**Reema Wadajkar**

Director of Events  
Hyatt Regency Pune  
Hotel & Residences

In her new role at Hyatt Regency Pune & Residences, as Director of Events, Wadajkar will be overseeing key sectors including business development, brand building, contract management, key account management, crisis management and client servicing. Wadajkar has 12 plus years of experience in the Hospitality industry, specializing in weddings. She has done her Bachelor's in Hotel Management from Kohinoor - IMI. She has worked with renowned hospitality brands like The Oberoi Group, Taj Hotels, Accor, Marriott and Hilton in India. Prior to joining Hyatt Regency Pune Hotel & Residences, Wadajkar helmed the conferences and events team at Conrad, Pune.



**Nikita Ramchandani**

General Manager  
JW Marriott  
Mumbai Juhu

In her new role as General Manager of the JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu, Nikita Ramchandani envisions a stellar roadmap for the hotel's positioning within the hospitality landscape. She has previously led the Operations discipline for the 135-hotels Marriott International portfolio as the Senior Area Director of Operations where she was responsible for setting the roadmap for new openings, talent development, guest experiences and F&B growth. She has over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Ramchandani's astute business and leadership skills have seen her take strides across her career graph with different challenges and roles across the landscape. She has previously been associated with esteemed brands such as Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts (Mumbai and Baltimore) and ITC Maratha – A Luxury Collection.





**Deep Preet Bindra**

Executive Chef

THE Park Mumbai

With an extensive experience of over 19 years in the hospitality industry, with immaculate knowledge and expertise in the culinary field, Chef Dandge cultivated exciting culinary techniques in curating and stimulating, personalised and memorable dining experiences by creating unique and gastronomical flavour combinations for all guests. In his expansive career span, Chef Deepak Dandge has handled culinary operations for leading hotels such as IHG hotels, Sofitel, Marriott, Taj, Starwood, Orchid, The Raintree. He was a student of Institute of Hotel Management (IHM).



**Reema Diwan**

Director Design and  
Technical Services

Accor

Reema Diwan will lead the planning, design and construction of projects under Accor and will be responsible for designing high-impact guest experiences. She has an extensive background in Hospitality design and a futuristic technical expertise. In the past, Diwan has been associated with Starwood Hotels & Resorts and Taj Hotels, Resorts & Palaces, where she was instrumental in crafting brand identity and conceptualizing various brands under the IHCL portfolio. She was the driving force behind several award-winning projects. Diwan holds a degree in design.



**Sunil Kumar**

General Manager

The Westin Goa

Sunil Kumar has over two decades of extensive career in world class luxury hotels. As the General Manager of The Westin Goa, with focus on health and wellness, Kumar will bring forth his beliefs in personal well-being to offer an enriching experience for everyone who walks in through the doors of the luxury resort. Kumar has a history of working with brands such as the Oberoi hotels, St Regis, Westin, Hyatt and more. Prior to his joining at The Westin Goa, Kumar was the prominent hotel manager of JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu and has also worked with Four Seasons as the Hotel Manager.

## MESSAGE

Dear Members of the Hotel and Restaurant Association Western India (Maharashtra only),

We are pleased to inform you, that as the Industry Status has been granted to the Hospitality Sector, the Hospitality sector is now eligible to avail the Industry rates on Non-Agri Tax, Electricity Duty, Water charges and much more.

You are therefore requested to kindly register using the given link provided by the Directorate of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra, to avail the above benefits:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/102pqZqSVF\\_LkQWFYTCcIIqGopWyf-MHiGjGRrJfFFw/](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/102pqZqSVF_LkQWFYTCcIIqGopWyf-MHiGjGRrJfFFw/)

Best Regards,

**Aspi Nallaseth**

Secretary General



## THE LAST LEAF



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**T**he grim situation prevailing in the Indian hospitality industry continues unabated under the second wave of the pandemic. The industry which had earlier emerged as one of the key drivers of growth among the services sectors in India is in a limbo. The hospitality sector in India primarily thrives on tourism, which is an important source of foreign exchange and employment. The hotel industry in India is a part of the travel and tourism industry.

Since the unlocking of the country in June 2020, the economy showed signs of recovery and with it the hospitality sector also witnessed a revival in demand since August-September. After the record decline of 23.9 per cent y-o-y in GDP during Q1 FY 2020-21, the second quarter of this fiscal year witnessed a softening of GDP contraction to 7.5 per cent as against earlier estimated range between 9 per cent and 11 per cent. RBI has also stated that the third and fourth quarter of FY 2020-21 may witness marginal positive growth in GDP over last fiscal year. Furthermore, there has been an upward revision of the GDP forecasts for FY2020-21 and FY 2021-22 from earlier estimates. We have also witnessed a record growth in GST collections in the latter half of 2020, with the month of December recording the highest monthly GST collections since its inception three years ago.

Similar signs of positivity have emerged in the hospitality space too. Leisure demand led the growth, with holiday destinations in close proximity to major cities witnessing a surge in weekend getaway demand. Goa, India's leading leisure destination witnessed a significant growth in room night demand in the last few months of 2020, with market-wide occupancy levels almost touching 55 per cent in November.

F&B demand also witnessed a recovery in recent months as people have started dining out. As per data on restaurant bookings made through leading Restaurant online booking platforms, there has been a nine-fold increase in table bookings from June to November 2020 across India, which can give the sector some brightness in 2021.

The second wave has significantly hit the recovery signs witnessed in the hospitality sector post the unlocking done in 2020 and the industry needs a lot of bold steps, care and nursing to bring back the pre-Covid vibrancy to it.



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