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HRAWI Concludes Its Third Empowering Hospitality Conclave & Awards

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The hotel and restaurant industry raised concerns over being held accountable for drunk driving accidents caused by patrons at the recently concluded Empowering Hospitality Conclave & Awards hosted by the Hotel and Restaurant Association (Western India) – HRAWI at Hotel Center Point in Nagpur on July 26, 2024. Besides discussing topical issues, the conclave featured presentations by subject matter experts on the new Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024, Cybersecurity essentials, Technology for enhancing guest experiences, and skill training sessions on subjects such as fire safety and pest management.

Delving into the growing trend of restaurateurs being held responsible for accidents caused by intoxicated patrons, the industry sought guidelines from industry stalwarts, policymakers, and law enforcers participating in the conclave. "The hotel and restaurant industry remains committed to responsible alcohol service and adherence to guidelines. Wherever we are wrong, we are happy to be corrected. However, lately, the restaurant industry has been feeling the full might of enforcement despite operating within the framework of the law. A guest consumes alcohol in a restaurant, causes an accident outside, and the restaurant gets blamed. Shopkeepers

who sell knives don't get held accountable for crimes committed with those items, but licensed restaurateurs have recently been prosecuted for crimes committed by customers. The industry seeks guidance on what regulations it should follow to avoid prosecution for incidents that occur outside its premises," stated Pradeep Shetty, President, HRAWI.

Special Guest Dr. Ravinder Singal (IPS), Commissioner of Police, Nagpur City, acknowledged the hospitality industry's concerns but emphasized the broader perspective law enforcers must maintain while enforcing law and order. "No one needs to fear if they have not broken the law. I am open to discussion with HRAWI, and maybe together we can find a solution that can be replicated across the State," he said. He also appreciated the high quality of service provided by the Indian hospitality industry.

The Chief Guest of the conclave, Dr. Sagnik Chowdhury, DDG & Regional Director (Western & Central), Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India, expressed his happiness at the conscious effort to create a platform for exchanging insights on various ongoing sectoral issues. He congratulated HRAWI for organizing such seminars and noted, "Guests from all parts of the world visit India, and the hospitality sector is essentially a melting pot of cultural exchanges. Enhancing guest

experiences is our core offering; we are more than just venues to stay." He also emphasized the need for the hospitality industry to focus on sustainability and community ties and implored the industry to dovetail its trade with the tangible heritage and intangible cultural heritage which are India's core strengths. The highlight of the conclave was the sessions by subject matter experts with topics that had practical applications and directly impacted the day-to-day operations of hotels and restaurants.

The conclave featured Rajesh Chopra, Head – Hospitality Business Vertical, Ingram Micro India, who presented on how technology can be an enabler for enhancing guest experiences and driving profitability. He also covered Cybersecurity Essentials for the hospitality industry, a crucial area in an increasingly digital world. Ingram Micro hospitality vertical acts as technology aggregator and has created technology solutions for the hospitality industry. These solutions come bundled with friendly financing options and option to recycle e-waste as per pollution control norms. CA Julfesh Shah, Former Vice Chairman of WIRC of ICAI, discussed the New Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2024, emphasizing its impact on the sector. "The new policy offers a 20% cash subsidy (up to ₹20 crores) for tourism projects like hotels and resorts, significantly boosting investment," Shah said. ■