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## INTERVIEW



**Nathan Andrews**  
Business Head of Hospitality  
DS Group PG 4 ▶

**Union Budget 2025**

# A Game-Changer for India's Hospitality Sector



# 20<sup>th</sup> Hotel Investment Conference - South Asia

9 - 10 April 2025 | The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake

## 20 YEARS

PAST, PRESENT AND *Prophecies*

### SOME NOTABLE SPEAKERS



**Abdulla Al Abdouli**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Marjan



**Anil Chadha**  
Divisional Chief Executive  
ITC Limited Hotels Division



**Anuraag Bhatnagar**  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Leela Palaces  
Hotels and Resorts



**Ashish Jakhanwala**  
Chairman, MD & CEO  
SAMHI Hotels



**Arun K. Saraf**  
Chairman and MD  
Juniper Hotels



**Atul Jain**  
Chief Operating Officer  
India, Sri Lanka, & Bangladesh  
Best Western Hotels



**Barbara Muckermann**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Kempinski Hotels



**Bhanu Chopra**  
Chairman & MD  
RateGain



**Behzad Kharas**  
Chairman & MD  
BNK Group



**Dillip Rajakarier**  
Group CEO, Minor International  
& CEO, Minor Hotels



**Dimitris Manikis**  
President - Europe,  
ME, Eurasia, & Africa  
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts



**Dr. Jyotsna Suri**  
Chairperson & MD  
The Lalit Suri  
Hospitality Group



**Dr. Sanjay Sethi**  
Managing Director & CEO  
Chalet Hotels



**Elie Younes**  
Executive VP & Global Chief  
Development Officer  
Radisson Hotel Group



**Gautam Birudavolu**  
Chief Executive Officer  
GreenPark Hotels  
& Resorts



**Harshavardhan Neotia**  
Chairman  
Ambuja Neotia Group



**Jatin Khanna**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts



**Kenneth Macpherson**  
Chief Executive Officer  
EMEA, InterContinental  
Hotels Group



**Kevin Goh**  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Ascott Limited



**Nathan Andrews**  
Strategic Advisor  
DS Group



**Nitan Chhatwal**  
Managing Director  
Shrem Infrastructure



**Pooja Ray**  
Managing Director  
Mayfair Hotels & Resorts



**Rahooll Macarius**  
Market MD Eurasia  
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts



**Rajeev Menon**  
President - Asia Pacific  
(excluding China)  
Marriott International



**Rajesh Magow**  
Co-Founder & CEO  
MakeMyTrip



**Ritesh Agarwal**  
Founder & Group CEO  
OYO



**Sébastien Bazin**  
Chairman & CEO  
Accor



**Shahid Balwa**  
Vice Chairman & MD  
DB Realty



**Shruti Shibulal**  
Director & CEO  
The Tamara Leisure Experience



**Sonica Malhotra**  
Joint Managing Director  
MBD Group



**Vibhas Prasad**  
Director  
Leisure Hotels Group



**Vikram Garg**  
Senior MD & Head of  
Asia Real Estate Asset  
Management, Blackstone



**Vikram Lalvani**  
Managing Director & CEO  
Sterling Holiday Resorts



**Vikram Oberoi**  
Chief Executive Officer & MD  
The Oberoi Group



**Zubin Saxena**  
Senior Vice President  
& Country Head - India  
Hilton



## ‘We will continue focusing on the mid-market hotel and service apartment sectors’

Ahuja Residency, with a presence of over 500 properties across major Indian cities like Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, and Chennai, has consistently redefined industry standards. In a candid conversation, **Jaideep Ahuja, the Managing Director and CEO of Ahuja Residency** at the helm of this dynamic enterprise, opens up about the challenges faced, the strategic decisions that propelled their remarkable growth, and the ambitious vision to expand their footprint across India and the Middle East.

**Q From starting as a bed to breakfast, during the 1982 Asian Games to becoming the leader in the service department sector, What were the key factors behind the transformation?**

Our group has always been rooted in hospitality, staying firmly focused on this sector. Recognizing the lack of quality and consistency in the budget segment, we set out to standardize the guest experience across all our properties whether residencies, guest houses, or hotels.

Smaller properties often lack professional staff compared to larger hotels. However, our dedicated focus on hospitality and a skilled management team enabled us to overcome this challenge. By bringing in top talent, we ensured a superior and reliable guest experience, setting a new benchmark for quality in the budget segment.

**Q What challenges did you face while introducing this concept in India, and how did you overcome them to set industry benchmarks?**

In the '80s and '90s, serviced apartments were an undefined category, and introducing the concept posed a major challenge. As we scaled—managing 500 apartments in one location—the complexity of operations became clear. Unlike hotels with structured hierarchies, serviced apartments require self-reliant teams, as daily supervision isn't feasible. Hiring for such roles, especially in India where multi-layered oversight is the norm, has been a significant hurdle.

Compounding this, 80% of our clientele is Japanese, known for their exacting standards. To meet these expectations, we implemented rigorous training and a cultural immersion program, sending 6–10 senior team

members annually to Japan. This initiative has been pivotal in bridging cultural gaps and delivering the perfection our clients expect.

**Q With over 500 properties across major cities, what strategies and milestones contributed to Ahuja Residency's nationwide growth?**

Our nationwide growth has been driven by the trust we've built with Japanese and Korean communities. Starting in Delhi NCR, we followed their expansion to areas like Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and Neemrana, setting up serviced apartments at their request based on positive experiences in Gurgaon.

Expanding across states comes with challenges, as each market requires a deep understanding. However, our strong relationships with Japanese and Korean clients gave us a strategic advantage. In cities like Mumbai, where we already had a hotel presence, we leveraged ties with corporate clients like Nestlé to serve them across multiple locations. Building trust was key once established, it enabled seamless expansion.

**Q Which cities or regions have shown the highest demand for serviced apartments? Can you share any data on occupancy rates, average guest stays, or demographics across your properties?**

The demand for apartments is rising nationwide, fueled by growth in metro cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Pune, along with emerging IT and manufacturing hubs. Foreign investments, particularly from regions like Spain, attract expats who follow the money, driving further demand for housing. Gujarat and Maharashtra are seeing the largest influxes, but there is also notable development in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Infrastructure projects, such as the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train, bring in additional expats, further boosting housing needs. Despite this growth, the apartment sector remains unorganized, with limited data on demand and supply, unlike the more structured hotel market. Our demographics consist of 90% expats, predominantly Japanese and Korean, with 10% NRIs. The average length of stay is 2 years, and we maintain a strong 95% occupancy rate.

**Q What are your future plans for Ahuja Residency in terms of expansion, innovation, or diversifying offerings within the hospitality sector?**

We will continue focusing on the mid-market hotel and service apartment sectors, with no plans to diversify beyond that for now. Our strategy includes expanding our apartment business into more cities across India and exploring opportunities in the Middle East. Our primary focus remains on the expat living service apartment segment. ■

asmita.mukherjee@safronsynergies.in



# ‘DS Group plans to invest INR 1000 Crores in hospitality expansion over the next few years’



The Dharampal Satyapal (DS) Group is ramping up its presence in the hospitality sector, aiming to grow its portfolio to 10–12 properties by 2027. With a planned investment of INR 1,000 crore, the group is targeting both metro cities and high-potential tier-II and tier-III markets. **Nathan Andrews, Business Head of Hospitality, DS Group** shares insights into the group’s strategy, which includes adding 800 rooms by 2026, leveraging global partnerships, and focusing on sustainable growth in high-demand regions. He also added that the hospitality division of the brand, which currently contributes 2.5% to the group’s total revenue, is positioned to play a key role in shaping DS Group’s future.

**Q** DS Group has announced plans to expand its hospitality portfolio to 10–12 properties by 2027. Could you share insights into the strategy driving this growth?

DS Group’s expansion strategy focuses on a balanced portfolio, spanning metro cities as well as tier-II and tier-III locations. This approach ensures a diversified market presence, catering to both luxury and value-driven segments while aligning with long-term industry trends and demand dynamics.

**Q** With an investment of INR 200 crore in expanding existing assets, what is the expected contribution of hospitality to the overall business portfolio?

Our projected investment in the hospitality division for the next few years is approximately INR 1000 crores. We are committed to funding this growth through a combination of internal resources and strategic partnerships. Currently, hospitality contributes 2.5% of the total revenue for the DS Group.

**Q** How have the occupancy rates and ARR (Average Room Rates) performed across DS Group properties in the last fiscal year? What are your projected RevPAR and room inventory targets for 2025 and beyond?

All the hospitality properties of DS Group have consistently outperformed competitive benchmarks in both occupancy and ARR. We expect this momentum to continue, driven by tactical asset positioning and operational efficiencies.

**Q** Are there any new hospitality projects or markets that DS Group is eyeing for future expansion?

DS Group currently operates in six cities, and the scope for expansion remains extensive. Our properties include the Radisson Blu Guwahati, Intercontinental Jaipur, Renaissance Bengaluru, Namah in Corbett and Nainital and Holiday Inn Express in Kolkata. As outlined in our strategy, we are evaluating new locations where we do not have a presence, ensuring alignment with market potential and feasibility.

The demand for hotels is on the rise, as more people are traveling, and India is increasingly becoming an investment hub, which is boosting tourism. Corporate travel, meetings, and conferences are in full swing, indicating a strong recovery in the hospitality industry. We anticipate significant growth driven by the rising ambitions of Indians and India’s emergence as a premier investment destination.

**Q** With a focus on tier-II and tier-III cities, which specific regions are you targeting for new properties?

Our focus is on metro cities as well as high-potential tier-II and tier-III locations, driven by market demand and strategic fit.

**Q** How does the planned addition of 800 rooms by 2026 align with market demand trends in high-growth areas? What sets DS Group’s hospitality ventures apart in the competitive 4–5-star segment?

DS Group’s hospitality expansion aligns with sustained market demand in key high-growth regions, as indicated by market research. To ensure

long-term relevance and differentiation, we invest in state-of-the-art properties designed in collaboration with best-in-class designers. This approach ensures our hotels remain contemporary and competitive well beyond their launch.

**Q The northeastern and eastern regions of India have been highlighted as key markets for DS Group. Could you share more about your investments and growth strategy in these regions?**

The northeastern and eastern regions of India are pivotal to DS Group's long-term hospitality strategy due to their untapped potential, growing tourism infrastructure, and increasing interest from both domestic and international travelers. The region is witnessing a surge in demand for quality accommodations, driven by the growth of leisure tourism, corporate travel, and the government's focus on regional connectivity and infrastructure development.

DS Group is actively exploring opportunities for both city hotels and resort developments in these areas. The focus is on creating premium properties that cater to diverse traveler needs while reflecting the unique culture and natural beauty of these regions. Each investment decision is carefully evaluated based on land availability, market feasibility, and long-term growth prospects.

The group's current presence in the northeast, exemplified by the Radisson Blu Guwahati, serves as a benchmark for quality and service excellence. Building on this success, DS Group aims to expand its footprint further by targeting emerging destinations and high-demand cities in the region.

**Q How do you plan to position DS Group's hospitality division as a market leader in India?**

DS Group's vision for its hospitality division is rooted in establishing a strong presence as a premier asset owner and developer in the Indian hospitality sector. The group's strategy is built on delivering high-quality properties that are meticulously designed, expertly developed, and managed by globally recognized hospitality brands. This ensures that each property not only meets but exceeds the expectations of discerning travelers while aligning with the operational standards of top-tier management companies.

Rather than focusing on direct consumer branding, DS Group takes pride in its role as a behind-the-scenes enabler of exceptional guest experiences. By collaborating with trusted international hotel operators, the group leverages their expertise in marketing, operations, and guest services to create properties that are synonymous with luxury, comfort, and reliability. This approach allows DS Group to maintain a competitive edge in the hospitality industry while achieving sustainable growth.

From an asset investment and development perspective, DS Group emphasizes innovative design, superior infrastructure, and long-term relevance.

**Q How critical are partnerships, such as the one with Radisson Hotel Group, to DS Group's hospitality strategy? Are there plans to bring in more global partnerships or unique concepts to further elevate the brand?**

DS Group's success in the hospitality segment is built on strong partnerships with globally recognised hotel management companies. The decision on brand affiliation and operator selection for each property is based on market suitability, brand confidence, and strategic alignment with our long-term growth objectives. ■

*asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in*



FOR THE HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONAL

**Hospitality  
BIZ**

www.hospitalitybizindia.com

**Editor-in-Chief & CEO** : Sheldon Santwan  
sheldon@saffronsynergies.in

## PUNE

**Editor & Business Head** : Sumit Jha  
sumit.jha@saffronsynergies.in, +91 9764062266

## MUMBAI

**Executive Editor** : Prasenjit Chakraborty  
prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in, +91 9819263364

## Editorial Team

## MUMBAI

**News Editor** : Disha Shah Ghosh  
disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in, +91 9619453170**Sr. Correspondent** : Tejaswini Paranjape  
tejaswini.paranjape@saffronsynergies.in, +91 99200 80545

## NEW DELHI

**Sr. Correspondent-North India** : Shayan Mallick  
shayan.mallick@gmail.com, +91 9818710659

## HYDERABAD

**Chief Correspondent-South India** : Asmita Mukherjee  
asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in, +91 98342 55360

## BENGALURU

**Social Media Consultant** : Vinora Crasta  
vinora.crasta@saffronsynergies.in, +91 97438 03969**Social Media Team (Mumbai)** : Nishtha Ganesh  
nishthaganes@gmail.com, +91 93240 36308

## DESIGN &amp; LAYOUT (MUMBAI)

**Madhukar Ingawale**  
madhukar.ingawale@gmail.com, +91 9967433821

## CONTRIBUTORS

## DELHI

Anurag Yadav, Nivesh Bhagtani

## MUMBAI

Marcellus Baptista, Bhisham Mansukhani,  
Dominic CostaBir

## DATABASE &amp; SUBSCRIPTION

**Senior Coordinator (Mumbai)** : Gauri Sawant  
gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in, +91 83690 80796**Coordinator (Mangaluru)** : Priya Karkera  
priya.saffron@gmail.com, +91 9702944562

## Tech Support

**Design & Development (Mumbai)** : Gilson Prabhudas

## Marketing Team

## NAGPUR

**Head - Sales & Marketing** : Ajay Wadode  
ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in, +91 8087127814

## MUMBAI

**Sr. Manager - Sales & Marketing** : Pooja Nalawade  
pooja.nalawade@saffronsynergies.in, +91 97690 52241**Manager - Sales & Marketing** : Jagdish Patil  
jagdish.patil@saffronsynergies.in, +91 74000 63663

\*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act



Saffron Synergies

902, 9th Floor, Cozy Apartments, Yari Road,  
Versova, Andheri (W), Mumbai-400061,  
Maharashtra, India.

# POSITIVE THOUGHTS, POSITIVE NUMBERS



The recently announced Union Budget by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman marks a significant milestone in the journey of the Indian Hospitality Industry. One expects the impact of various announcements to be multi-dimensional - influencing an increase in tourism movement; creation of skilled and professional workforce; focusing on environment-friendly operations; promotion of Indian cuisine and traditional hospitality practices; and of course, the ripple effect of all this is going to be resulting in a robust hospitality sector. All this is expected to aid overall economic growth and development.

The announcement of developing 50 destinations with state collaboration is bound to boost infrastructure, employment and sustainable tourism. Investments in tourism infrastructure and connectivity enhancements, like the development of greenfield airports and the modified UDAN scheme, are set to increase the number of both domestic and international tourists coming into India. The inclusion of new hotels in these destinations under the infrastructure harmonized list (HML), where land is provided by state governments, marks another crucial step. Hospitality investors can now avail of infrastructure lending at more favourable terms, with enhanced limits and access to larger funds via External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs). Focused initiatives, including promoting spiritual and medical tourism, along with the Heal in India initiative, backed with the proposed streamlined e-visa system and Visa fee waiver for tourists from select countries will promote inbound tourism, increasing room occupancies. Talking of the hospitality business, the industry seems to have been on a roll. According to a published report by Horwath HTL (using data from CoStar) that offers a comprehensive analysis of the Indian hospitality market for 2024, despite economic challenges and a year devoid of major events like the G20 Summit or large sporting events, the Indian hospitality sector recorded robust growth in 2024. The national occupancy rate stood at 63.9%, with an ADR of INR7,951 and a RevPAR of over INR5,000, representing a 10.7% growth. The industry added 14,400 chain-affiliated rooms, bringing the total supply to over 200,000 rooms. The pipeline of 113,000 rooms includes 105,000 set to open by 2029. Daily room demand surged to 123,000, a 30% increase from 2019, effectively absorbing the 32% supply growth during this period.

The mushrooming of unorganised hotels across the country, without any focused approach towards providing a standardised quality, or worrying about their guest satisfaction, is a point of concern. Such hotels, need to have some basic standards in place, that must be strictly followed and scrutinised by authorities on an ongoing basis. We know that a thriving hospitality industry can contribute significantly to the economy by generating employment, increasing tax revenues, and promoting allied industries such as F&B, transportation, and entertainment, but if we have to be known as a nation offering seamless travel and hospitality experience, we must aim to standardise any such offerings.

Sumit Jha  
Editor & Business Head

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**Editor** : Sheldon Eric Santwan

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# Budget Highlights 2025 | Perspective On Prospects

By Prof. Satish Jayaram, PhD – Ideator | Innovator | Incubator

Excitement and optimism runs rife as intended positivity scores, checking boxes at Budget 2025. Initiatives to enhance Viksit Bharat Vision 2047 have been addressed with emotional intelligence. The pragmatic question to answer is whether the mind is without fear as the head is held high. Prima facie, the pros appear to outweigh the cons, but are there many slips between the cup and the lip? This perspective on prospects aims to address five areas: aspiration, consumption, infrastructure, skilling/start-ups and well-being/spirituality for hospitality and by extension, its education sector.

**1. Aspiration:** Topping the list, is anticipating spends through increased discretionary funds, putting more cash in the hands of prospects. And by foregoing INR 1 trillion in tax revenues, food and beverage checks may raise the ante - as food processing, seafood, pulses, ready to eat foods, drive the manufacturing agenda. Truly speaking, the state of GDP growth has steadied from 3.87% in 2019-20, at 6.37% in 2024-25, after seeing 9.69% in 2021-22 and 8.15% in 2023-24. True that RevPARs are up 26-28% over the INR 4500 mark countrywide in the same period between 2019 to 2024. And ARRr did grow 31-33% with the needle touching INR 7500 levels as rooms became more valuable around then. It now needs to be demographically established that ARRr will enhance, on account of this sub-INR 12 lpa micro-market tax relief. A revenue segment TA now hopefully plush with cash, may aspire check-in to hotels at leisure.

**2. Consumption:** Will this audience truly fly to the 120 new destinations in Tier 2-3 cities as Udaan re-connects? And will revenues get supplemented from global appeal, through e-visas by aiding inbound travellers? This remains to be seen, even as domestic traveller hordes, travel about unabashedly (as auto sales testify, due to better roads). A well-meaning farm to fork agri-initiative will need an overhaul in post-harvest infrastructure at scale, boosting food sales. The profusion of food delivery apps as a 'go-to' will need nicer terms of endearment to cater to this demand. Economically, the availability of cash to access purchase of valued items, may in fact send AI enabled e-commerce ecosystems on mobile networks into overdrive. These must work double-time to deliver popular electronic goods to discerning audiences that order-in, rather than going out to consume, they had rather be served where they prefer.

**3. Infrastructure:** Building and branding destinations, Top 50 to begin with, will also need to consider access aside Mudra loan releases.

MRTS or similar means to enhance urban to mofussil travel could be an enabling connector. Consider urban commutes, typically by hospitality and similar-industry talents. They may have free cash, aspiration and desire but a relevant facilitating mechanism to aid experience needs rethink. PPPs may aid access, subject to investments meeting short term tactical, insular objectives. And while more hotels, resorts and homestays get built in time, a sustainable mobility solution needs to be prioritized, as both guests and staff need to be able to reach destinations without stress. AI could potentially save future implementation heartache as RoI pressures gather momentum. And acceptance to avail subsidies, as part of the burgeoning infrastructure sector, real icing on the infra cake.

**4. Skilling/Start-Ups:** Job preparedness and employment are real benefits as 140 million temporary and permanent jobs get created in five years. 5 national hospitality and tourism skilling centres need to address the mismatch between skills taught in educational institutions against the dynamic demands of employers. Credible research indicates that 53% graduates and 36% postgraduates remain underemployed. And this as AI could trigger big shifts in labour markets while India's VISWAM and SARVAM play catch up with DeepSeek. Big budgets allocated to MoSDE/MeitY could dovetail empowering next generation entrepreneurs as employability trounces employment capacity. Global Innovation Hubs focusing on quality, research and development need to solve 300-foot issues before 30000 feet future preparation. Empowerment of both the employable as well as employer communities remain.

**5. Well-Being/Spirituality:** Perfectly timed is Heal In India, with medical tourism promising to be the next billion spinner. If opening the gates from South East Asia promoting and enhancing the Buddhist circuit is any indicator, heritage, culture, spirituality and an enormous outlay for religious tourism promise to rekindle a potent solution, that works!

Emotional well-being, meditation, yoga, alternate and natural therapies including the Ayurveda renaissance with branded retail off-the-shelf marketability are only one tip of the solution pyramid. If the revenue management genius of Kumbh Mela is intriguing as a celebrated case example, this inherent ingenuity is definitely well-ensconced. What we definitely need to stay focused on is this attention to holistic well-being, to ensure that emotions are balanced with rationality as we progress. Monies aside, here is a deeply entrenched culture that holds high volume revenue potential, only if properly democratized.

Historical discussions have dominated demands of financial and policy support, to address a much-needed industry status. Ease of doing business, end-user value chain tax rationalization and relief measures to address high fixed costs remain moot. Murmurs regarding GST input credit and tax status clarity loom large in practical terms. Yet a hypothetically strategic, economic and tactical approach to address existing pain-points holds value! And a fraction of the tax-paying population remains placated. ■

*The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.*



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## ‘We are also considering other culturally significant areas in India, such as Gujarat & Uttar Pradesh’

From preserving traditional architecture through sustainable practices to offering bespoke events and intimate wedding venues, Legacy Mandawa is setting new standards in heritage tourism. In an exclusive conversation, **Sanat Hooja, Partner, Machan Resorts LLP** discusses the journey behind this unique venture, its role in the brand’s broader expansion strategy, and its commitment to promoting local culture and community engagement.

**Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad**

**Q The Legacy Mandawa is a stunning addition to The Machan portfolio. Can you share the inspiration behind this project and how it reflects Rajasthan’s royal heritage?**

Legacy Mandawa by The Machan is inspired by the royal legacy of Rajasthan, incorporating elements from the famous havelis and frescoes found in Mandawa. The fusion of cultural richness and opulence with modern luxury creates an immersive heritage experience, all while providing exceptional comforts.

**Q What were the major milestones in your journey toward establishing Legacy Mandawa by The Machan?**

The primary milestones included identifying Mandawa as a prime location for its rich history and proximity to major tourist hubs.

Collaborating with local artisans to ensure an authentic aesthetic, restoring traditional edifices through sustainable building practices, and curating a unique experience for guests were also some of the significant milestones achieved during this initiative.

**Q What challenges did you face in conceptualising and executing a project that pays homage to Rajasthan’s culture while meeting modern luxury standards?**

The challenges we encountered during the conceptualisation and execution of this project were primarily related to three key areas. Firstly, we aimed to ensure that the design and offerings remained true to the royal heritage of Rajasthan while also providing luxury amenities. Secondly, we focused on maintaining eco-friendly practices while preserving the historical architecture. Lastly, we sought to honor local traditions while integrating contemporary expectations of comfort and service.

**Q How does this new venture fit into your broader expansion strategy? Are there plans to introduce similar heritage-inspired properties in other regions?**

The Legacy Mandawa paves the way for future developments that seamlessly combine local heritage with luxury. In light of the success of this project, we are also considering other culturally significant areas in India along with Rajasthan, such as Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, for similar endeavors. Furthermore, we seek to cultivate a distinctive

identity for The Machan through heritage-driven initiatives.

**Q What sets The Legacy Mandawa apart from other luxury heritage destinations in Rajasthan?**

The Legacy Mandawa distinguishes itself from other heritage destinations by emphasizing bespoke events and intimate weddings, making it an excellent choice for personalised celebrations. Every element of the hotel is designed to deliver a profound cultural experience, showcasing decor, cuisine, and activities that are rooted in local heritage. Moreover, we adopt environmentally sustainable practices while preserving the luxurious and traditional essence.

**Q Intimate weddings and bespoke events are a key focus of the brand. How have you tailored the property’s design and services to cater to these niches?**

Legacy Mandawa’s stately venues like heritage halls, sprawling lawn, royal courtyards along with luxurious suites and opulent culinary offerings cater to Intimate weddings and bespoke events.

**Q How does the property engage with the local community, be it through employment, showcasing local crafts, or promoting regional culture?**

Legacy Mandawa plays an important role in establishing connections with the local community by focusing on the employment of local talent in various capacities. We collaborate with local artisans to incorporate authentic decor, textiles, and artwork. These artisans are also given opportunities to conduct workshops and performances in the hotel premises, to showcase the art, music, and their cultural traditions.

**Q What are your future expansion and investment plans for The Machan, and are there any specific regions or themes you are exploring?**

The Machan’s forthcoming expansion initiatives are focused on exploring locations with a rich cultural heritage, especially in Rajasthan and various regions across India. We also remain committed to innovating through eco-friendly practices and developing properties that resonate with themes such as royal heritage and rural retreats. ■

asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in



## ‘Kaapi Solutions : Crafting the Perfect Brew’

Since its inception in 2017, **Kaapi Solutions** has redefined India’s coffee landscape under the leadership of **Vikram Khurana**, a coffee aficionado with over 23 years of experience in the Italian coffee industry and global coffee cultures. Transforming the specialty coffee ecosystem, Kaapi Solutions has become a one-stop destination for cutting-edge coffee equipment, barista training, and consultancy. In an exclusive interaction with **Asmita Mukherjee**, Khurana shares his vision for Kaapi Solutions, the challenges of building a Pan-India presence, and the strategies driving the rise of third-wave coffee culture in India.

### Q What inspired you to start Kaapi Solutions, and how has the journey evolved since its inception in 2017?

As the CEO of Kaapi Solutions, my journey with coffee spans decades, driven by an enduring passion for this extraordinary beverage. With over 23 years immersed in the Italian coffee industry and diverse global coffee cultures, I’ve come to understand that coffee is far more than a drink—it’s an experience, a craft, and a true art form. When we established Kaapi Solutions in 2017, our vision was clear: to bridge the gaps in India’s coffee ecosystem. Our mission goes beyond offering coffee machines; we strive to deliver comprehensive solutions that empower businesses to flourish.

### Q Can you share the vision behind making Kaapi Solutions a one-stop destination for coffee equipment in India?

At Kaapi Solutions, our goal has never been limited to delivering equipment. We envisioned ourselves as a true partner, empowering hotels, cafés, and restaurants to consistently serve exceptional coffee. Beyond providing cutting-edge technology, we offer consultancy, barista training, and guidance in coffee selection. Our mission is to build a holistic ecosystem that equips hospitality businesses with the tools and expertise they need to thrive in a competitive and ever-evolving market.

### Q What challenges did you face in establishing a Pan-India presence for a niche segment like specialty coffee machinery, and how did you overcome them?

Venturing into the niche segment of speciality coffee machinery came with its challenges. Specialty coffee in India is still an emerging market, brimming with potential but often undervaluing the critical role of technology in crafting exceptional coffee. Many businesses view advanced machinery as an expense rather than a long-term investment. Our approach has been centered on education—engaging with clients to highlight the cost-benefit dynamics and demonstrating how quality technology not only minimizes operational challenges but also enhances their offerings, ultimately driving growth.

One of our key challenges was helping businesses and consumers understand the true essence of specialty coffee. Manual brewing alone is not enough; advanced technology and proper training are critical to ensuring exceptional coffee. We stepped in as educators, conducting workshops, training sessions, and consultations to emphasize the importance of superior beans, skilled preparation, and cutting-edge machinery.

Cost sensitivity and logistical challenges were key hurdles we addressed to drive growth. Many businesses underestimated the long-term benefits of high-quality machinery, so we introduced flexible financing and scalable

solutions, enabling them to start small and grow. By highlighting reduced maintenance costs and enhanced customer satisfaction, we built trust in advanced technology. To expand into tier-2 and tier-3 cities, we established a robust service network, ensuring reliable after-sales support and training nationwide.

Specialty coffee is more than a trend—it’s a transformative movement shaping India’s coffee culture. At Kaapi Solutions, we empower businesses with the tools, knowledge, and support to deliver world-class coffee experiences, making “specialty” not just a label but a standard we uphold every day.

The international coffee markets have significantly influenced our strategy. Globally, businesses emphasize robust investments in high-quality equipment to ensure consistent output and reduced maintenance costs. In India, however, the focus often leans toward minimizing upfront costs, which can lead to higher operational challenges over time. At Kaapi Solutions, we champion a shift in this perspective. Investing in the right technology from the outset isn’t just a smarter choice—it’s transformative. It empowers cafés and hotels to prioritize growth and customer satisfaction instead of grappling with recurring repairs and inconsistent quality.

### Q With the rise of third-wave coffee culture in India, how is Kaapi Solutions helping shape the preferences of Indian consumers and businesses?

India’s third-wave coffee culture is a fascinating evolution, celebrating coffee as an artisanal craft. We’re proud to be at the forefront of this movement, playing a pivotal role in shaping its growth. Through our advanced coffee machines and comprehensive training programs, we enable hospitality businesses to deliver the nuanced flavors and elevated experiences today’s discerning consumers seek. Additionally, we collaborate with clients to design workflows and spaces that optimize efficiency while enhancing the overall customer experience.

### Q Could you provide insights into Kaapi Solutions’ financial growth and performance over the past few years?

We have a strong belief in the Indian coffee market, which has undergone a significant transformation over the past decade. Our financial performance reflects this optimism, with an impressive growth rate of over 60% in the last seven years. For the current fiscal year, we’re aiming for a growth rate of 25% or more. These numbers not only showcase our success but also highlight the exciting opportunities we’re creating for coffee entrepreneurs across India. ■

*asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in*



# Kshemavana focuses on next-gen wellness seekers

In a bid to redefine wellness tourism, Kshemavana Naturopathy and Yoga Center is making waves with its unique “Stay and Heal” packages. **Dr Narendra Shetty, Chief Wellness Officer, Kshemavana Naturopathy and Yoga Center**, shares the center’s pioneering approach, which seamlessly blends luxurious accommodations with traditional naturopathic therapies and yoga. Dr. Shetty explained how Kshemavana’s serene, eco-conscious environment, coupled with bespoke wellness programs, nourishing cuisine, and immersive retreats, caters to the growing demand for both mental and physical rejuvenation. He also revealed that a surge in interest from millennials and Gen Z, particularly for the center’s digital wellness solutions.

## Q Could you share how your “Stay and Heal” wellness packages cater to today’s health-conscious travelers?

“Stay and Heal” wellness packages at Kshemavana cater to today’s health-conscious travelers by offering a holistic approach to wellness, combining stunning natural settings with luxurious amenities and services. Kshemavana provides a tranquil environment for growth, healing, and relaxation, perfect for those seeking a rejuvenating getaway.

### Wellness Programs and Activities

- **Yoga and Meditation:** Kshemavana offer yoga and meditation classes, led by experienced instructors, to help guests achieve mental clarity and physical balance.
- **Wellness Treatments:** Stay at Kshemavana offers a range of treatments, from massages and facials to detox programs and holistic therapies, promoting overall well-being.

### Accommodations and Amenities

- **Eco-Friendly Design:** Kshemavana incorporate sustainable design and eco-friendly practices, appealing to environmentally conscious travelers.
- **Healthy Dining:** Kshemavana serves nutritious, grain-free diets, supporting guests’ health goals.
- **Private Villas and Rooms:** Luxurious accommodations offer private spaces for relaxation, often with breathtaking views of nature.

### Unique Experiences

- **Holistic Retreats:** Kshemavana offers specialized retreats, focusing on mindfulness, Breathwork, Detoxification, or Gut Health, led by expert facilitators.

By providing these comprehensive wellness programs, luxurious amenities, and unique experiences, Kshemavana’s “Stay and Heal” wellness packages cater to the diverse needs of today’s health-conscious travelers.

## Q Can you share insights into the occupancy rates for wellness packages at Kshemavana? Are you observing a growing interest from younger travelers or international guests?

Kshemavana’s wellness centre sees an average occupancy rate of 50–60% every month, with seasonal and holiday periods seeing somewhat higher levels of occupancy. I’ve seen that Kshemavana emphasizes sustainability, organic farming, and evidence-based traditional Indian medicinal methods, which may appeal to younger, eco-aware tourists. Additionally, their association with Healing Hotels of the World raises the possibility that they will attract foreign visitors looking for holistic wellness experiences.

## Q How do your ARR (Average Room Rates) compare for wellness retreats versus standard hospitality stays, and what trends are you noticing?

Wellness retreats command 20% more than average room prices than hotels and resorts due to the value creation of everyday activities including yoga, consultations, food, lodging, and treatments.

## Q How is Kshemavana adapting its wellness offerings to meet the needs and expectations of millennials and Gen Z?

Kshemavana, is likely adapting its wellness offerings to meet the evolving needs and expectations of millennials and Gen Z.

To cater to these younger generations, Kshemavana is incorporating more holistic and preventative approaches to wellness, focusing on mental health, self-care, and sustainable living. This includes offering retreat workshops, or one-on-one sessions on mindfulness, meditation, and yoga.

Digital wellness solutions are also likely to be integrated into Kshemavana’s offerings, given Gen Z’s comfort with technology and their preference for online resources. These include virtual Consultations (both Pre and Post stay), Online Yoga Sessions or social media platforms that provide wellness content, community support, and personalized guidance. In addition, Kshemavana expands its wellness services to address specific concerns of millennials and Gen Z, such as Stress management, Lifestyle Disorders, and Metabolic issues, Gut Health etc. This involves partnering with experts in these areas or developing specialized programs that address these issues.

By adapting its wellness offerings in these ways, Kshemavana can better meet the needs and expectations of millennials and Gen Z, providing them with a more comprehensive and supportive approach to wellness.

## Q Are there any upcoming expansions, collaborations, or innovations planned for Kshemavana that you’d like to share with us?

In order to give worldwide wellness enthusiasts a method to contact Kshemavana has partnered with Healing hotels.

We are working on brown field projects in India and other countries as part of Kshemavana’s expansion. Because of our belief in longevity projects backed with evidence-based data and technological assistance, Kshemavanaleads the industry in innovation. Additionally, we are working to establish longevity study clinic in every Indian city. ■

*asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in*



# Firewater Neo Bar and Kitchen Sparks Culinary Magic in the Financial District

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Hyderabad's Financial District just got a whole lot hotter with the arrival of Firewater Neo Bar and Kitchen. Following the roaring success of their HiTech City location, Firewater has expanded its empire, bringing its unique brand of culinary magic to the 12th floor of The District building.

From the moment one step inside, Firewater exudes an air of sophisticated cool. The sleek, wave-inspired lighting dances across the stylish interiors, while strategically placed greenery adds a touch of natural elegance. The ambiance is both chic and welcoming, making it the perfect backdrop for any occasion, from a romantic dinner for two to a celebratory gathering with friends. The thoughtful design ensures that every corner of the restaurant offers a unique and memorable experience.

But Firewater is more than its beautiful decor. The menu is a testament to culinary artistry, a carefully curated collection of global flavors interwoven with the rich tapestry of Indian culinary traditions. Prepare your taste buds for a journey. The Adraki Lamb Chops are a revelation – tender, smoky, and utterly irresistible. For a taste of fusion flair, the Andhra Chilli Arancini delivers a delightful spicy kick. And the Kung Pao Chicken — a masterclass in balancing sweet, spicy, and savory, with a distinctly desi twist.

The culinary adventure continues with offerings from the tandoor, like the FW Ghee Roast Chicken, a symphony of rich ghee and aromatic spices. For those seeking comfort food with a soul, the Mutton Nalli Paya is a must-try. Seafood lovers will rejoice in the perfectly crispy Fish and Chips, while the Hakka Noodles offer a comforting embrace of Asian flavors.

No culinary journey is complete without dessert, and Firewater doesn't disappoint. Innovative creations like the Gadbad Gulab Jamun Kulfi, a playful layering of textures and tastes, or indulge in the Rasmalai Tres Leches, a delightful fusion of Indian and Western dessert traditions.

Beyond the exceptional food, Firewater distinguishes itself with its impeccable hospitality. The attentive staff goes above and beyond to ensure a seamless and memorable dining experience for every guest. Firewater Neo Bar and Kitchen isn't just a restaurant; it's an experience — a culinary destination. ■

[asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in](mailto:asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in)





## 'Guests today seek an overall experience rather than just good food or stay'

**Chef Satyakumar GV, Executive Chef at Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel**, is redefining the city's culinary landscape. A Hyderabad native, Satyakumar has travelled over 24,000 kilometres across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, uncovering tribal and regional culinary traditions. At Sheraton, he's elevating dining with authentic Telugu specialities at Feast and modern, interactive Pan-Asian menus at Zega. In an exclusive interaction with **Asmita Mukherjee**, he shared plans to make Sheraton Hyderabad an F&B hotspot through immersive dining and global collaborations.

### **Q** Can you share a bit about your background and your journey leading to your recent role at Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel? What are your plans for elevating the hotel's culinary offerings?

My core expertise lies in Japanese and Western cuisine, but over the years, I've mastered Indian cuisine as well. Being a Telugu native, born and raised in Hyderabad, I have a deep understanding of Telugu and Hyderabadi cuisines.

In fact, I conducted extensive research across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, travelling over 24,000 kilometres in seven months. I visited villages, met tribal communities, food historians, and restaurant owners, and even collaborated with cultural organisations like All India Radio and Telangana Tourism. This project allowed me to explore the nuances of regional cuisines, and I bring this knowledge to Sheraton to create a unique dining experience.

### **Q** It's been three months since you joined. What changes have you implemented, and what can we expect in the future?

The last three months have been exciting. We've revamped the buffet offerings at Feast to enhance the presentation and overall experience. Moving forward, we plan to focus more on regional and micro-cuisines, particularly Telugu specialities. We aim to showcase these at Feast, our all-day dining restaurant.

For Zega, our Pan-Asian restaurant, we're working on a new menu, set to launch by the end of the quarter. It will feature a modern approach with interactive plating, adding elements of drama like fire and smoke for a memorable dining experience. We also plan to host pop-ups and collaborations with international chefs at Zega to elevate the guest experience.

### **Q** You mentioned Telugu specialities. How do you plan to integrate them into Feast?

We'll be introducing a range of Telugu regional dishes, incorporating elements from both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Additionally, we're planning pop-ups featuring professional chefs who specialize in micro-cuisines. For instance, we'll showcase tribal and community-specific foods, creating an authentic culinary journey for our guests.

### **Q** Does Sheraton Hyderabad plan pop-ups across all its restaurants or just Zega?

Zega will focus on international chef collaborations due to its Pan-Asian theme. For example, we have a pop-up with Inja, a Japanese-Indian

fusion restaurant from Delhi, scheduled for January 30th to February 1st. At Feast, we'll concentrate on regional and Indian cuisines, bringing in renowned chefs for curated food festivals.

### **Q** Post-COVID, have you noticed a change in guest preferences?

Absolutely. Guests today seek an overall experience rather than just good food or stay. They want to be engaged. At Sheraton, we focus on creating immersive dining experiences. For example, we offer vegan and gluten-free options at our breakfast counters, and we're flexible in accommodating dietary preferences and allergies.

### **Q** How do you plan to differentiate your three restaurants from other five-star properties in Hyderabad?

Each of our restaurants offers a distinct experience. Feast, for instance, competes directly with similar offerings at The Westin, but our buffet spread and presentation are unique. Zega, on the other hand, focuses on Pan-Asian cuisine with a modern twist, setting it apart.

### **Q** What trends are you observing in Hyderabad's F&B market for 2025?

There's a growing focus on micro-cuisines, especially Maharashtrian and regional Andhra-Telangana dishes. Guests are increasingly interested in exploring specific community-based cuisines, such as Reddy or Naidu culinary traditions, and even temple and Brahmin food. We're also seeing a demand for immersive dining experiences, where the presentation is as important as the taste.

### **Q** What's your vision for 2025? Any challenges you foresee?

2025 looks promising for the Hyderabad F&B market. I don't see any major challenges, but guests are becoming more demanding, particularly regarding quality and authenticity. Our focus will remain on delivering exceptional experiences, backed by our culinary expertise and attention to detail.

### **Q** How do you ensure Sheraton Hyderabad caters to the growing demand for healthy dining options?

We've already incorporated vegan and gluten-free options into our menus and breakfast buffets. Our team is well-equipped to customize dishes based on dietary preferences. This flexibility ensures that we meet the evolving demands of health-conscious diners. ■

*asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in*

# Union Budget 2025

## A Game-Changer for India's Hospitality Sector

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The Union Budget 2025 has placed tourism and hospitality at the forefront of its growth strategy, introducing several transformative measures that promise to reshape the industry and boost its global competitiveness.










One of the most significant announcements is the development of 50 top tourist destinations under challenge mode. This initiative, coupled with streamlined e-visas and visa-free access for select international tourists, is expected to significantly increase inbound travel, enhancing India's appeal as a global tourism hub. The inclusion of new hotels in these destinations under the infrastructure harmonized list (HML), where land is provided by state governments, marks another crucial step. Hospitality investors can now avail infrastructure lending at more favorable terms, with enhanced limits and access to larger funds via External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs).

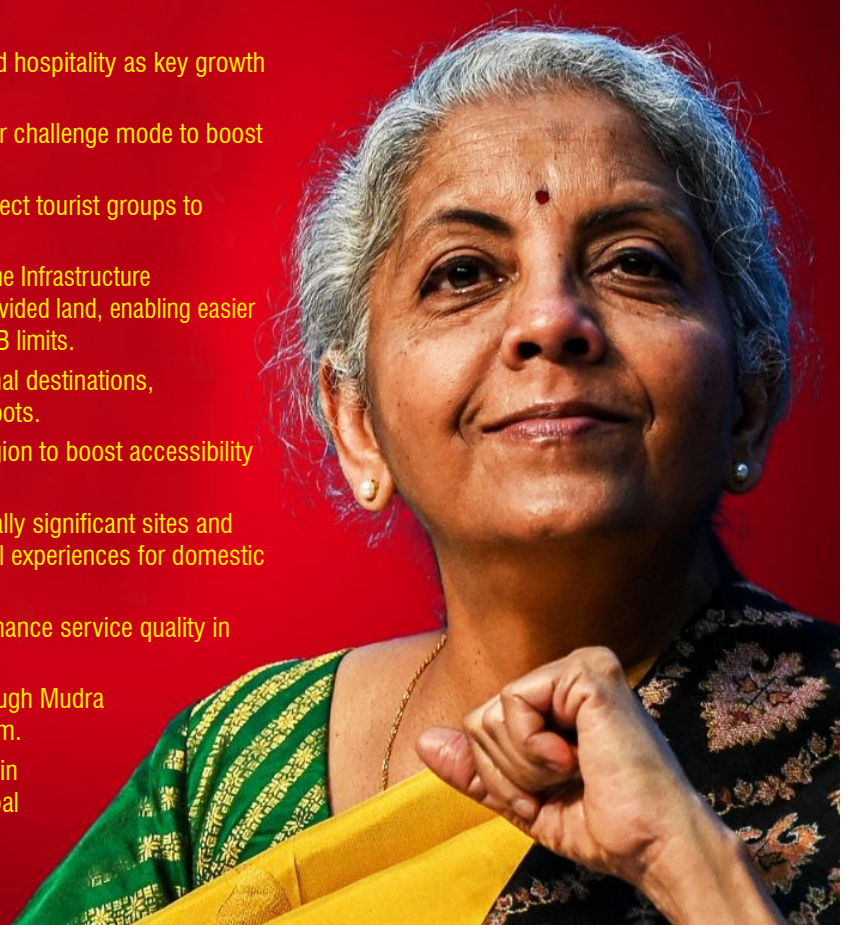
Connectivity also takes center stage in this year's budget, with a modified UDAN scheme aimed at connecting 120 additional destinations. This initiative, alongside the development of helipads in the Northeastern region, will open up remote but picturesque destinations to travelers. These measures are expected to drive significant growth in tourist footfall, particularly in underexplored regions of the country.

The government's focus on the Buddhist Circuit is another noteworthy highlight. By investing in infrastructure and promoting these culturally significant sites, the plan creates a lucrative opportunity for the hospitality sector to develop premium accommodations and curated travel experiences. This will cater to both domestic and international travelers, further strengthening India's position as a spiritual and cultural tourism hotspot.

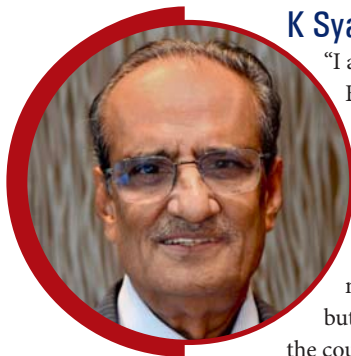
Moreover, the budget addresses the need for skill development and community involvement in tourism. With enhanced initiatives through Institutes of Hotel Management (IHMs) and financial support for homestay businesses via Mudra loans, the government aims to foster high-quality services while empowering local communities to play an active role in the tourism ecosystem.

### Key Takeaways

-  The Union Budget 2025 emphasizes tourism and hospitality as key growth sectors.
-  Development of 50 top tourist destinations under challenge mode to boost India's global appeal.
-  Streamlined e-visas and visa-free access for select tourist groups to increase inbound travel.
-  Inclusion of new hotels in 50 destinations under the Infrastructure Harmonized List (HML) for projects with state-provided land, enabling easier access to infrastructure lending and enhanced ECB limits.
-  Modified UDAN scheme to connect 120 additional destinations, improving connectivity to emerging tourist hotspots.
-  Development of helipads in the Northeastern region to boost accessibility for remote destinations.
-  Focus on the Buddhist Circuit to promote culturally significant sites and develop high-quality accommodations and travel experiences for domestic and international travelers.
-  Skill development initiatives through IHMs to enhance service quality in the hospitality sector.
-  Financial support for homestay businesses through Mudra loans to foster community involvement in tourism.
-  Promotion of medical tourism through the 'Heal in India' initiative, positioning the country as a global wellness hub that attracts travelers seeking rejuvenation and holistic healing.



## Industry leaders have lauded these initiatives



**K Syama Raju, President, FHRAI**

“I am happy to see the Union Budget 2025 focus on growing India’s tourism sector. The plan to develop the top 50 tourism destinations in partnership with state governments is a major initiative. This collaboration will not only improve infrastructure but also help spread tourism across the country, attracting more visitors and

benefiting local communities. Additionally, the inclusion of hotels in the harmonious master list and the granting of infrastructure status to the hospitality sector is a significant move. This aligns with our long-standing request for granting of Infrastructure Status to the hospitality industry. This will facilitate access to cheaper, long-term financing, enabling hotels in these newly developed destinations to upgrade their facilities and offer world-class services, further boosting the sector.

The focus on medical and wellness tourism through the ‘Heal-in-India’ initiative in the Union Budget 2025 is a forward-thinking move that will strengthen India’s position as a global leader in healthcare. India has already earned a reputation for providing world-class medical treatments at a fraction of the cost found in developed countries. By promoting ‘Heal-in-India,’ the government aims to further capitalize on this strength, attracting international patients seeking affordable, high-quality healthcare services. This initiative will not only boost medical and wellness tourism but will also create a platform for India’s healthcare industry to expand its global footprint. With the support of the government, healthcare facilities across the country will be encouraged to offer specialized treatments and services, making India an attractive destination for patients from both developed and developing nations.

The introduction of visa fee waivers and e-visa options for certain tourist groups will make India an even more attractive destination. Simplifying the visa process will encourage more international visitors, boosting tourism and further contributing to the economy.

The government’s focus on promoting religious tourism is also noteworthy. India’s rich spiritual and cultural heritage is a major draw for both domestic and international tourists, and the efforts to enhance infrastructure at key religious sites will create more organized, accessible, and enjoyable experiences for pilgrims and travelers alike. This will help further establish India as a leading destination for religious tourism, driving both tourism revenue and cultural exchange.

The modified UDAN scheme, aimed at enhancing regional connectivity to 120 new destinations and carrying an additional 4 crore passengers over the next 10 years, is another important initiative. This will make travel more accessible to a larger number of people, driving tourism to both popular and emerging destinations and improving economic opportunities for local communities.

The introduction of Mudra loans for homestay businesses is another positive step. It will give local entrepreneurs the chance to start and grow small tourism businesses, especially in lesser-known areas. This will help create more jobs and encourage tourism in these regions.

The National Geospatial Mission to improve mapping and spatial data will aid in better planning and development of tourism infrastructure. Overall, these measures show that the government is committed

to making India a top global tourism destination and creating new opportunities for growth, jobs, and innovation in the sector.”



**Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts**

“The Union Budget’s strategic emphasis on tourism is a welcome move that will significantly boost India’s hospitality industry. The development of 50 key destinations under challenge mode, along with streamlined e-visas and visa-free access for select tourist groups, will drive international footfall and enhance India’s global appeal.

The government’s initiative to include new hotels coming up in 50 key destinations in the infrastructure harmonized list (HML) for projects where land will be provided by the state governments is a welcome step. This will help hospitality investors to avail infrastructure lending at easier terms with enhanced limits and offer access to larger amounts of funds as External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs).

The government’s plan to introduce a modified UDAN scheme for strengthening connectivity to additional 120 destinations and supporting helipads development in northeastern region will help to connect potential tourist destinations in the region.

Particularly, the focus on the Buddhist Circuit presents immense opportunities for hospitality expansion. With greater infrastructure and promotion around these culturally significant sites, we see strong potential to develop quality accommodations and travel experiences in these regions, catering to both domestic and international travelers.

Additionally, skill development initiatives through IHMs and financial support for homestays via Mudra loans will strengthen the sector, ensuring high-quality service and deeper community involvement in tourism growth. Cygnett Hotels is keen to align with these initiatives, expanding our footprint in high-growth destinations and playing a pivotal role in India’s tourism success story.”



**Dr. Sanjay Sethi, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, Chalet Hotels Limited**

“The Union Budget 2025 has outlined a set of impactful initiatives that will play a pivotal role in boosting India’s tourism sector, underscoring the government’s dedication to advancing the travel and hospitality

industry. Key measures, including Indian visa-free access for specific foreign groups, simplified e-visa procedures, and the expansion of the UDAN scheme to 120 new destinations, will greatly improve connectivity and ease of travel, benefiting both domestic and international tourists.

The planned development of 50 key tourist destinations in collaboration with state governments is a game-changer, ensuring better

infrastructure, improved connectivity, and world-class amenities. This will not only elevate India's global tourism competitiveness but also encourage private sector investment in the hospitality ecosystem.

The government's focus on medical tourism is another welcome move that positions India as a leading global hub for high-quality healthcare and wellness services, driving demand for hospitality and allied sectors. More importantly, putting extra disposable income in the hands of the consumer will boost overall consumption, as well as help in accelerating domestic tourism and increase demand for hotels and travel services. With tourism playing a critical role for employment generation and economic contribution, these measures will act as strong enablers for sustained growth."



### Aditya Sanghi, CEO, Hotelogix

"I welcome the government's commitment to enhancing tourism across 50 destinations linked to Lord Buddha's journey. The expected influx of visitors will spur the development of new hotels and infrastructure. It will significantly support India's growing religious tourism, which is set to generate a revenue of about 59 billion by

2028 and create 140 million temporary and permanent jobs by 2030. Also, the proposed streamlined e-visa system and Visa fee waiver for tourists from select countries will promote inbound tourism as the country is getting ready to host 3%-5% more foreign tourists in 2025 vs. last year."



### Manju Sharma, Managing Director, Jaypee Hotels & Resorts

"We at Jaypee Hotels and Resorts commend the Government of India for the visionary 'Heal in India' initiative in the Union Budget 2025-26. This program, supported by a 20,000 crore rupee allocation by government, focuses on medical tourism and aligns perfectly

with our wellness offerings at Tamaya Spa at Jaypee Greens Golf & Spa Resort, Greater Noida. Our specialized treatments, including traditional Ayurvedic treatment, various kind of yogas, aqua based treatments and modern wellness services, position us to serve the growing medical tourism sector. The government's emphasis on employment-led growth, improved amenities, and infrastructure harmonization will enhance the experience for medical tourists. We are actively developing partnerships to create comprehensive wellness packages, combining medical treatments like naturopathy combining with allopathy by a registered doctor with rejuvenating spa experiences. This holistic approach sets the stage for India to become a global leader in healthcare and wellness tourism.

In addition, the government's plans to develop the top 50 tourist destinations across the country, with states providing land for hotel development, will significantly boost the hospitality sector. The focus on improving ease of travel, giving streamlined facilities, and potential visa

fee waivers for select tourist groups will incentivize travel. The special emphasis on spiritual and religious tourism, particularly destinations related to Lord Buddha, will attract more visitors. These comprehensive measures will drive India's growth as a premier tourism destination."



### Ayu Tripathi, Director, Aahana Resort

"We appreciate the government's forward-looking vision for India's tourism sector as outlined in the Budget FY2025-26 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The comprehensive measures announced demonstrate a clear commitment to strengthening tourism infrastructure and enhancing

the overall visitor experience across the country. The plans to develop 50 premier tourist destinations, along with the successful air connectivity to 120 new destinations, will enable an additional four crore passengers over the next 10 years to explore India, showcasing promising growth potential. The emphasis on diverse segments, including spiritual, religious, and medical tourism, suggests potential opportunities for varied tourism experiences across India. As industry stakeholders, we welcome these developments and look forward to contributing to India's growing hospitality, travel, and tourism landscape."



### Kush Kapoor, CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts

"The Union Budget 2025 presents a forward-thinking approach that is bound to benefit the hospitality and tourism sector significantly. The announcement of visa waivers for select foreign tourist groups will undoubtedly make India a more accessible and attractive destination for global travelers. The provision

of Mudra loans to support homestays is a commendable step toward boosting grassroots tourism and encouraging local entrepreneurship. These measures will not only enhance travel experiences but also strengthen community-driven hospitality ventures.

Moreover, the tax exemption for upto Rs 12 lakh income, and the resulting relief for a large section of the population are game changers for the industry. With higher disposable incomes, people are likely to increase their spending on travel, dining, and leisure experiences. This boost in discretionary spending will drive demand across hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-related businesses. The government's thoughtful initiatives will contribute to bolstering consumer confidence and ultimately play a significant role in the growth of the hospitality sector and the nation's economy as a whole."

### Rajesh Ghanshani, Director of Partnerships, STAAH

"We are glad to learn that the Union Budget 2025-26 presents a promising outlook for the hospitality space. The government's focus on providing infrastructure status to hotels in select tourist destinations will





undoubtedly ease access to financial resources and enable much-needed development in key regions. Additionally, the introduction of initiatives like the promotion of medical tourism and the provision of Mudra loans for homestays will create avenues for rural tourism within the hospitality sector. This budget aligns well with the industry's need for support in expanding its reach, fostering local businesses, and driving sustainable

growth in 50 select destinations. With these measures, we look forward to seeing a more vibrant hospitality ecosystem that will benefit both businesses and the communities they serve."

**Ambika Saxena, CEO, TWH Hospitality**



"This year, the government has presented a well-balanced and growth-oriented budget, specifically supporting the tourism and hospitality sectors. The modified Udaan scheme will open doors for the hospitality sector by bringing new tourist destinations into the spotlight. Hotels, resorts, and homestays in unexplored regions will see a

surge in demand, encouraging further investment and development. With the government's push for connectivity and including new 120 destinations, we expect a stronger pipeline in the hospitality sector, catering to both business and leisure travellers in emerging tourism hotspots."

**Arun K Chittilappilly, Executive Chairman and MD, Wonderla Holidays Ltd.**

"The Union Budget 2025's focus on tourism is a visionary step toward strengthening India's travel landscape. Developing 50 top destinations with state collaboration, enabling land and hotel projects, and



introducing MUDRA loans for homestays will boost infrastructure, employment, and sustainable tourism. E-visa extensions and visa fee waivers further enhance accessibility for global travelers. Additionally, tax reforms, including TDS rationalization and higher income exemptions, will increase disposable income, encouraging greater discretionary spending—especially among Gen Z.

These measures position India as a global tourism hub while driving economic growth."

**Chander Mansharamani, Vice Chairperson, ICPB**



"The Union Budget 2025 is a commendable step towards strengthening India's tourism industry, with the development of 52 new destinations, improved connectivity under UDAN, and a strong focus on Buddhist, medical, and wellness tourism. These initiatives will not only enhance India's appeal as a

global travel destination but also open new avenues for the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) industry.

As India continues to invest in tourism infrastructure and simplify travel procedures, it is crucial to recognize the economic and social impact of the MICE sector. The industry contributes significantly to business tourism, employment generation, and overall economic growth. We at ICPB (India Convention Promotion Bureau) urge the government to prioritize the MICE industry within the tourism framework, ensuring policies and incentives that position India as a leading global MICE destination. With strategic initiatives, India has the potential to become a preferred hub for international conferences, exhibitions, and corporate events, driving long-term growth and positioning the country as a powerhouse in the global meetings industry."



**Davinder Juj, General Manager,  
Eros Hotel, New Delhi, Nehru  
Place**

“The provisions outlined by our esteemed Finance Minister in the Union Budget 2025 are encouraging. Her emphasis on positioning India as a spiritual destination is likely to generate increased interest among international travelers, thereby becoming a crucial driver

for the growth of the travel and hospitality sectors and the broader Indian economy. The initiative to promote India as the land of Lord Buddha and Lord Ram is expected to attract Non-Resident Indians, which will promote tourism. Additionally, the focus on land acquisitions for hotel development is anticipated to draw foreign investments, further fostering growth and advancement in the sector. The reduction in visa fees to promote medical tourism is a noteworthy measure that will directly benefit hotels financially. Furthermore, an allocation of Rs 20,000 crore aimed at enhancing tourism-related employment will assist various states with prominent tourist attractions in developing infrastructure and improving connectivity. Overall the budget represents a significant impetus for attracting foreign tourists, which will, in turn, stimulate the growth of the hospitality, travel and tourism industries.”



**Kahraman Yigit, Co-founder &  
CEO of Olive**

“The Union Budget 2025-26 recognizes tourism as a key driver of employment-led growth and extending infrastructure benefits to hotels in 50 select destinations is a welcome move. The sector anticipated infrastructure status, GST reforms, tourism incentives, and increased investment in travel infrastructure to drive growth and ease

financial access. The focus on spiritual and medical tourism, visa waivers, and regional connectivity through the UDAN scheme will further boost domestic and international travel, unlocking new opportunities for the hospitality sector. At Olive by Embassy, we see these initiatives as a step toward creating a more vibrant, accessible, and investment-friendly ecosystem for hospitality in India.”



**K.B. Kachru, Chairman, Radisson  
Hotel Group South Asia &  
President – Hotel Association  
of India (HAI)**

“Budget is progressive, especially with its focus on tourism and job creation. The government’s commitment to developing 50 new destinations, and improving infrastructure, is promising. This year’s budget very well highlights the importance of promoting spiritual and medical

tourism with neighbouring countries and simplifying visa processes to enhance international travel. Overall, the initiatives taken by the

government in this year’s budget are the steps in the right direction for the industry.”



**Aditya Pande, Group Chief  
Executive Officer, InterGlobe  
Enterprise**

“This budget outlines a compelling roadmap for a Viksit Bharat. The focus on boosting consumption through targeted tax relief for the middle class, coupled with the government’s commitment to streamlining tax procedures, will significantly improve ease of doing business and unlock further economic potential.

At InterGlobe Enterprises, we are particularly encouraged by the strategic investments and vision for strengthening the holistic tourism ecosystem in the country, with the development of infrastructure and focus on skilled workforce. These initiatives lay a solid foundation for sustained economic progress and a brighter future for the country.”



**Dharamveer Singh Chouhan,  
Co-founder & CEO, Zostel**

“We appreciate the government’s continued commitment to strengthening regional tourism and connectivity in India. The plan to develop the top 50 tourism sites in collaboration with states, along with including hotels in the harmonized infrastructure list, is a significant step toward boosting the sector. Enhanced connectivity, better

infrastructure, and a strong push for medical and regional tourism will make it easier for both domestic and international travelers to explore India’s hidden gems. Since its inception, Zostel has been at the forefront of sustainable and experiential tourism, working alongside locals and governments to spotlight lesser-known destinations. We will continue this mission and would be happy to collaborate with Bihar and other state governments to promote local employment, culture, and cuisine through responsible tourism.”



**Pranav Dangi, Founder and CEO,  
The Hosteller**

“The Union Budget 2025 presents a robust vision for India’s tourism sector. The emphasis on infrastructure development, support for homestays through Mudra loans, and the inclusion of hotels in the harmonized scheme will strengthen the industry’s foundation. Additionally, developing 50

tourist destinations will definitely enhance India’s position as a global travel hub. Being in the travel and hospitality space for more than a decade, I see these initiatives as the required push for accessibility, affordability, and innovation in travel setting the stage for India to emerge as a top global destination.”

# Much Ado about nothing

By **Nathan Andrews**, Author & Hospitality Consultant

Every year it seems to me that the markets work themselves into a frenzy of anticipation around the advent of the budget. The presentation of the budget is then followed by a series of pontifications by industry experts, opining on the impact or lack thereof of their sector, after which everyone returns to the tasks at hand and life usually goes on as normal.



This is particularly true I believe about the hospitality sector. Forgive me for a sense of resignation, but I have long given up expecting any significant breaks for our sector. The best we can hope for is for no additional taxes or levies, and with that, we are if we are honest usually satisfied.

While the hospitality industry is a huge source of employment and therefore a key player in the economic and social fabric of the country, the produce of the hospitality sector particularly in the organized sector is seen as at best catering to the elite at worst countenancing social sins as perceived by some. This ambivalence to our industry is seen in the government's lip service to the sector, while in reality treating it as a necessary evil.

Industry status could of course be quite easily given with little or no hoopla as the line between the development of hotels and real estate is a very fine one if at all. However, any relief in taxes, would undoubtedly raise a hue and cry from the so-called socialists, who enjoy five-star hospitality, but would never admit it. Therefore, it is too much to expect the government to spend social capital for what is erroneously seen as a rich man's indulgence. Only when the lens itself through which hospitality is viewed changes, can we hope for any significant incentives or tax breaks.

It would appear that we have escaped relatively unscathed this year and for that let us be thankful, and let us continue to live in hope, hopefully not in the sense the Webster dictionary defines the term as in 'to hope for something when one knows it will probably not happen or be true' ■

*The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.*



## NEWS BULLETIN

### Uttar Pradesh secures INR 1 Trillion in hospitality investments, Ayodhya and Varanasi in focus

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Uttar Pradesh has attracted investment proposals worth INR 1 trillion in its hospitality sector over the past two years, fueling the development of hotels, resorts, guesthouses, wellness centers, and homestays across its 75 districts. Religious and spiritual hubs like Ayodhya, Varanasi, and Prayagraj, along with tourism hotspots such as Lucknow, Agra, Kanpur, and Noida, are at the forefront of this growth.

Ayodhya is set to add 10 new hotels, while Varanasi will see the establishment of 12



properties, reflecting the increasing demand driven by the consecration of the Lord Ram

temple in 2024, which attracted 16.4 million pilgrims in that year alone.

This surge in investments is aligned with the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Policy 2022, which aims to enhance tourism infrastructure in partnership with the private sector. Following the success of the Global Investors Summit in 2023, major hospitality brands like the Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), under the Taj Group, have committed to expanding in the region. IHCL plans to open a luxury Taj property in Ayodhya, collaborating with the Solitaire Group to cater to the rising influx of pilgrims and tourists. ■

# The billion dollar industry of Indian weddings: Trends in budgeting and grandeur

By **Dr. Niraalee Shah, MD**, Dr. Niraalee Shah Travel Design Pvt Ltd

Indian weddings have long been a spectacle of colours, culture, and tradition, with an unmistakable aura of grandeur. What was once a family affair has transformed into a multi-billion dollar industry, captivating not just the hearts of Indian families but also the global market. In this article, we will explore the trends shaping the modern Indian wedding industry, particularly in terms of budgeting and extravagance, while also delving into the statistics and reports that highlight its economic significance.

## The Scale of the Indian Wedding Industry

India's wedding industry is estimated to be worth approximately \$50 billion in 2023, with projections suggesting steady growth in the coming years. According to a report by KPMG (2018), the industry is expected to touch \$70 billion by 2025, driven by both increasing disposable incomes and the growing number of weddings being held annually. The wedding market in India is not only large in scale but also diversely distributed across regions, income groups, and traditions, making it a dynamic and complex sector.

## Budgeting: The Changing Dynamics

In the past, Indian weddings were often modest affairs, centered on intimate rituals and family celebrations. However, in recent years, the scale of spending has risen dramatically, and so have the expectations, as per a report by The Wedding Brigade, the average cost of an Indian wedding has increased by approximately 25% over the last five years, with urban weddings commanding an even higher price tag.

One of the major factors influencing wedding budgets today is the preference for lavish celebrations. In metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore, weddings are becoming synonymous with grandeur. This shift is not only a reflection of changing social dynamics but also an economic transformation, where status, luxury, and global exposure play significant roles.

## Key Components of Wedding Budgets:

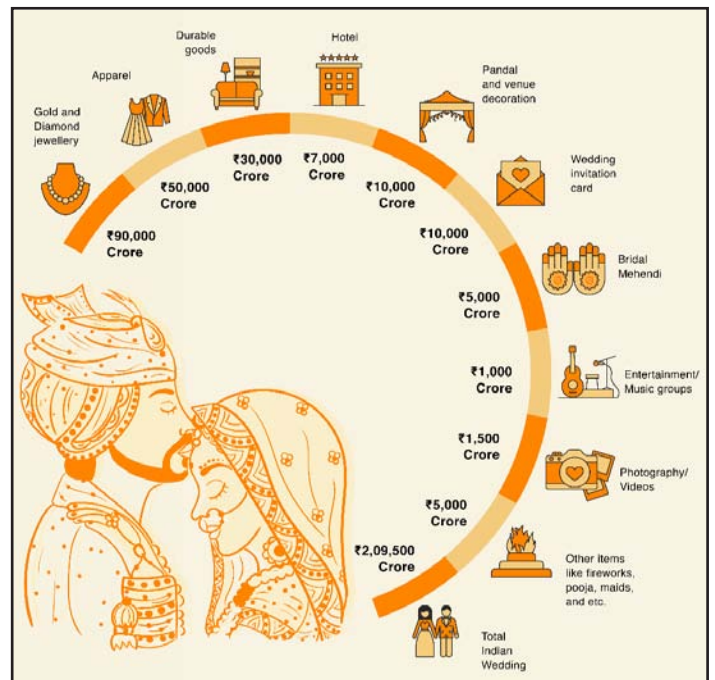
- Venue and Decor:** Often one of the most significant portions of the wedding budget, venue selection and decor have seen a massive shift. The cost of booking five-star venues or luxury banquet halls has escalated, contributing to a rise in the overall wedding costs. For example, in Mumbai, an upscale wedding venue can cost anywhere between ₹10 lakhs to ₹1 crore, depending on the scale and services provided.
- Catering and Food:** Indian weddings are incomplete without elaborate spreads, and food is a critical area where money is spent. The cost of catering has been rising due to the trend of international cuisine, multiple-course meals, and food stalls. On average, catering alone can account for 20-30% of the wedding budget.
- Wedding Apparel and Jewelry:** Traditionally, the bride and groom would opt for modest clothing and jewelry, but nowadays, the bridal attire has become a major point of focus. Luxury brands,

designers, and bespoke creations are a part of the bridal shopping list. According to a Times of India article (2022), Indian families now spend an average of ₹10-15 lakh on bridal apparel and jewelry.

## 4. Entertainment and

**Photography:** A growing demand for high-quality photography, cinematography, and entertainment services has led to significant spending in this category. The trend of hiring professional photographers, videographers, and live performers can push wedding budgets to new heights, with costs ranging from ₹5 lakh to ₹50 lakh or more.

- Wedding Planner Fees:** The rise of wedding planners has introduced a level of professionalism in the Indian wedding industry. Wedding planners today can charge anywhere between ₹2-15 lakh, depending on the complexity of the event.



## Trends Driving Wedding Grandeur

- Destination Weddings:** One of the most notable trends in the Indian wedding industry is the rise of destination weddings. Popular locations such as Udaipur, Goa, and Jaipur have become synonymous with high-budget, luxury weddings. According to a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) report, the destination wedding market in India is valued at over ₹1,000 crore and is expected to grow by 25% annually. Families are opting for destination weddings not only for

the picturesque locales but also for privacy and exclusivity. These weddings often involve significant expenses in travel, accommodation, and event coordination.

2. **Technology Integration:** From live-streaming weddings for global guests to creating digital invitations, technology has redefined the wedding experience. The integration of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) for wedding functions is another emerging trend, contributing to an increase in overall spending.
3. **Eco-friendly Weddings:** A shift towards sustainability is also gaining momentum, with many couples choosing eco-friendly wedding options. This includes biodegradable wedding decor, reduced waste, and sustainable attire. A study by The Economic Times (2022) found that 18% of wedding planners are focusing on sustainable weddings, driven by growing environmental concerns.
4. **Celebrity Influence:** Celebrity weddings continue to play a significant role in shaping wedding trends. The high-profile weddings of celebrities like Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma or Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh have set the tone for lavish celebrations, often influencing commoners' wedding choices. These

weddings are often inspirations for the masses, leading to increased demand for similar extravagant celebrations.

### The Future of Indian Weddings

The future of the Indian wedding industry looks promising, with emerging trends like luxury pre-wedding shoots, high-end wedding technology, and sustainable wedding options. The market is expected to continue evolving as disposable incomes rise and aspirations grow, with more families willing to spend on extravagant experiences.

In conclusion, the Indian wedding industry is not only an essential part of the cultural fabric but also a major economic contributor. As families spend more to ensure their weddings are remembered for years, the industry's value is expected to continue soaring. Whether it's through grandeur, sophistication, or technology, the million-dollar industry will keep adapting to new trends, shaping the very nature of weddings in India. ■

*The views expressed within this column are the opinion of the author, and may not necessarily be endorsed by the publication.*

## NEWS BULLETIN

# Brigade Hotel Ventures Limited gets SEBI nod for IPO

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Brigade Hotel Ventures Limited, the second largest owner of chain-affiliated hotels and rooms in South India among major private hotel asset owners, has received the Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI") approval for its proposed initial public offering.

The Company's initial public offering comprises of a fresh issue of Equity Shares of face value of INR 10 each aggregating up to INR 900 Crores.

Brigade Hotel Ventures Limited is the owner and developer of hotels in key cities in India primarily across South India. They are the second largest owner of chain-affiliated hotels and rooms in South India (comprising the states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, and the Union territories Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Pondicherry) among major private hotel asset owners (i.e., owning at least 500 rooms pan India) as of June 30, 2024.

Brigade Hotel Ventures Limited is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Brigade Enterprises Limited which is one of the leading Indian real estate developers in India. BEL entered into the hospitality business in 2004 with the development of their first hotel Grand Mercure



Bangalore, which commenced operations in 2009. The company has a have a portfolio of nine operating hotels across Bengaluru (Karnataka), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Kochi (Kerala), Mysuru (Karnataka) and the GIFT City (Gujarat) with 1,604 keys. The hotels are operated by global marquee hospitality companies such as Marriott, Accor and InterContinental Hotels Group and are in the upper upscale, upscale, upper-midscale, and midscale segments. The hotels provide a

comprehensive customer experience including fine dining and specialty restaurants, venues for meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions ("MICE"), lounges, swimming pools, outdoor spaces, spas, and gymnasiums. The hotels are strategically located in areas with high population density, premium neighbourhoods, commercial centres and IT hubs.

JM Financial Limited and ICICI Securities Limited are the Book Running Lead Managers to the issue. ■

# Indian Hospitality sector steady in recovery, December 2024 sees positive momentum in Occupancy and ARR growth

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

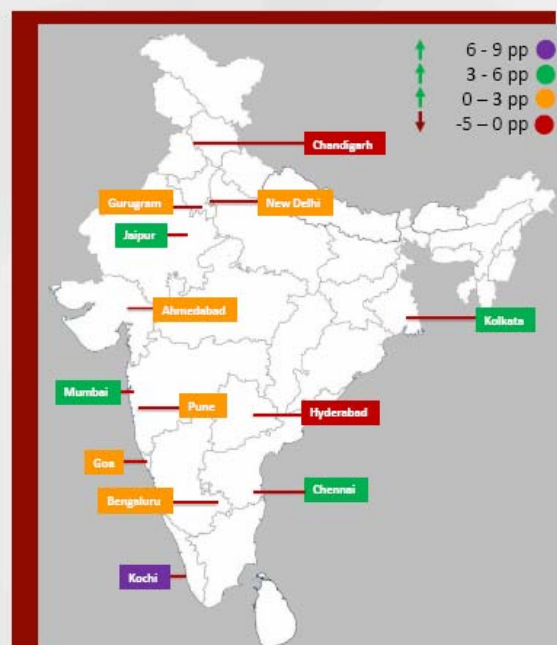
The Indian hospitality industry has continued its steady recovery, with December 2024 reflecting year-on-year growth in occupancy rates and average room rates (ARR), according to the latest HVS-ANAROCK Hotels & Hospitality Monitor – January 2025. While the sector is edging closer to pre-COVID levels, significant variations in performance were observed across key markets.

Occupancy rates for December 2024 showed encouraging signs, with Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, and Kochi crossing the 80% threshold. Mumbai emerged as the frontrunner, registering the highest occupancy at 81-83%, while Kochi displayed remarkable year-on-year growth, improving by 5-7 percentage points. However, not all markets shared the same trajectory, as Chandigarh and Hyderabad reported slight declines in occupancy, ranging from 2-5 percentage points.

The sector's performance in Q4 CY2024 highlighted a notable recovery compared to the preceding quarter, although pre-COVID occupancy benchmarks remain elusive. Among the cities, Jaipur stood out with the highest increase in occupancy from Q3 CY2024, whereas Bengaluru, Chennai, Pune, Gurugram, and Hyderabad experienced a dip. Encouragingly, year-on-year occupancy growth was observed in Q4 CY2024 across most markets compared to the

## Occupancy Trends Across Key Indian Markets

(Year-on-Year Growth: December 2024)



Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year

## India Hotel Sector Performance

(December 2024)

- Occupancy rates in December 2024 experienced steady year-on-year growth, aligning closely with pre-COVID levels for the same period.
- Average Room Rates (ARR) maintained their upward momentum, though the pace of year-on-year growth has begun to stabilize.



Source: HVS Research; Data for Calendar Year  
Cover Image Courtesy: Storii by ITC Hotels, Moira Riviera, Goa

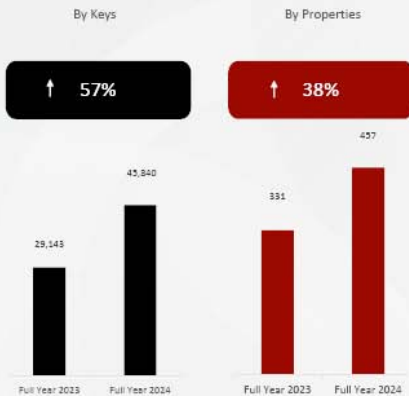
same period in CY2023.

ARR trends revealed positive developments, with nearly all major commercial markets recording strong year-on-year growth during Q4 CY2024, barring Ahmedabad. December 2024 continued this momentum, with ARR rising across key markets,

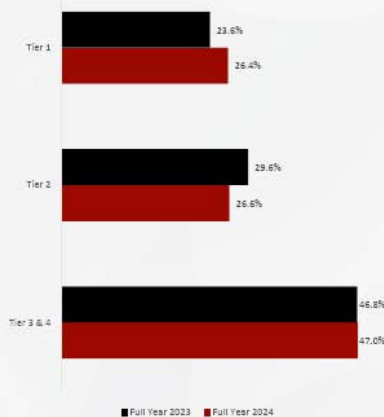
except for Goa, where only slight growth was noted. Despite this, Goa retained its position as the market with the highest ARR, exceeding INR 14,000. Kochi once again stood out as a high performer, leading the year-on-year ARR growth chart due to strong demand. ■

## Branded Hotel Market Signings Analysis (Full Calendar Year 2024)

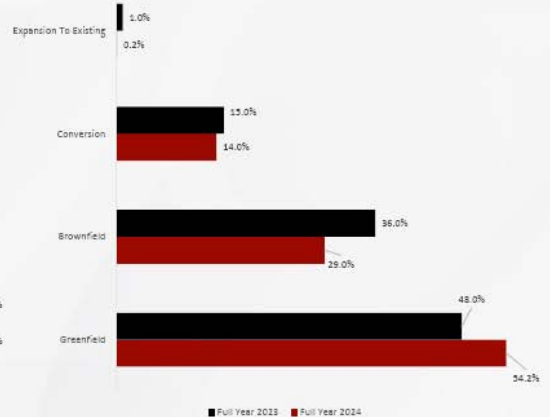
Number of Signings



Signings by Keys by City Tier (in %)



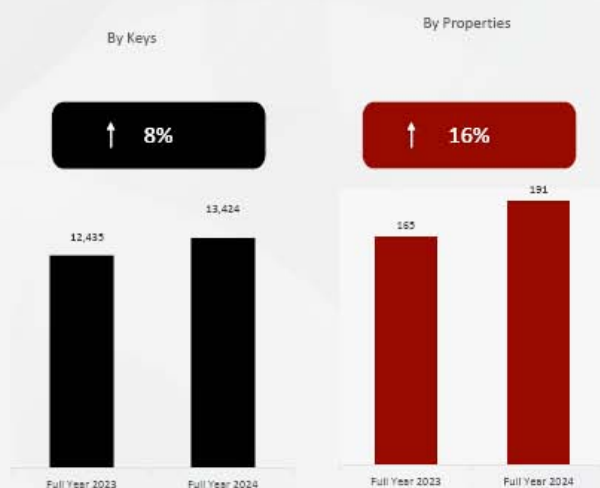
Signings by Keys by Status of Development (in %)



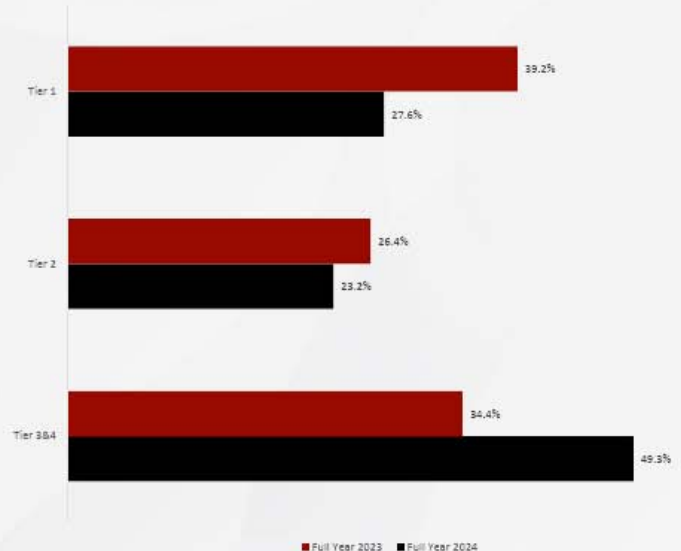
Source: HVS Research; Data collated by HVS from 20 hotel operators and media reports as of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025; Tier 1 cities consist of Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Goa, Jaipur, Gurugram; All data is for the calendar year; Data subjected to change

## Branded Hotel Market Openings Analysis (Full Calendar Year 2024)

Number of Openings



Number of Openings by Keys (Tier Analysis)



Source: HVS Research; Data collated by HVS from 20 hotel operators and media reports as of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025; Tier 1 cities consist of Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Goa, Jaipur, Gurugram; All data is for the calendar year; Openings include full and partial openings; Data subjected to change

# A Feast for the Senses; Sheraton Hyderabad's Culinary Gem



## Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Hyderabad — a city renowned for its rich culinary heritage, boasts a vibrant dining scene. Amidst this bustling landscape, Feast, the all-day dining restaurant at the Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel, carves a niche for itself, offering a delightful fusion of global flavors and local Hyderabadi charm. More than just a hotel restaurant, Feast presents a carefully curated dining experience that caters to both discerning travelers and local food enthusiasts.

FeastStepping into Feast is like entering a warm and inviting haven. The contemporary interiors, thoughtfully designed with elements that subtly nod to Hyderabad's cultural tapestry, create a sophisticated yet comfortable ambiance. The open kitchen adds a dynamic touch, allowing diners a glimpse into the culinary artistry unfolding before them. Natural light streams through the large windows, enhancing the restaurant's aesthetic appeal and creating a welcoming atmosphere for any occasion, from a casual lunch to a special celebration.

FeastFeast's menu is a gastronomic journey that spans continents, offering a delectable array of Indian, Asian, Mediterranean, and Western dishes. The extensive buffet, a daily changing spectacle, is a highlight. A vibrant spread of fresh salads, comforting soups, an impressive selection of main courses, and a tempting array of desserts – a true feast for the eyes and the palate.

FeastLive stations at Feast elevate the dining experience, offering interactive counters where chefs prepare dishes à la minute. Whether it's perfectly cooked pasta, sizzling chaats, or regional specialties, the



personalised touch adds a special dimension to the meal.

The iconic Hyderabadi biryani, fragrant and flavorful, is a must-try, as are the succulent kebabs and the traditional sweet treat, Qubani ka Meetha. For those seeking international flavors, the menu boasts a diverse selection, from delicate sushi and flavorful dim sum to classic continental favorites.

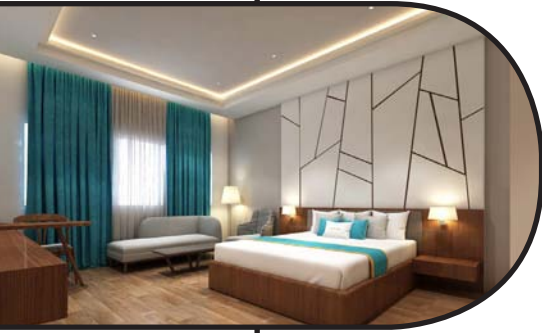
FeastThe restaurant also regularly features seasonal promotions and food pop-ups, showcasing global cuisines and highlighting the freshest seasonal ingredients.

To complement the culinary offerings, Feast boasts a carefully curated beverage menu. From signature cocktails and fine wines to artisanal mocktails, there's something to please every palate. ■

[asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in](mailto:asmita.mukherjee@saffronsynergies.in)







## Zone Connect by The Park Prayagraj

Strategically located in the heart of the sacred Kumbh City, Zone Connect by The Park Prayagraj offers a perfect blend of comfort and spiritual serenity, making it an ideal stay for both devotees and travellers. It is located just 2 km from Prayagraj Railway Station and 13 km from Allahabad Airport offering easy access to the city's key landmarks, including the iconic Triveni Sangam, just 6.7 km away. The guests can savour exquisite vegetarian cuisine at Café C, host gatherings in the Townhall banquet accommodating up to 100 people, and hold meetings in the versatile Grey Zone, designed for up to 30 participants. For rejuvenation, the Vitalia Spa & Fitness Centre provides a tranquil escape, ensuring a balanced and fulfilling stay experience.

## Jawai Zinc Journey by The Fern

Jawai Zinc Journey by The Fern, Jawai, Rajasthan features 18 beautifully appointed rooms and tents, ensuring a personalized and comfortable stay. Guests can enjoy an array of dining options, including The Jungle Kitchen, a multi-cuisine restaurant serving delectable meals throughout the day and The Jungle Bar, offering refreshing beverages in an atmospheric jungle-inspired setting. For a truly unique dining experience, the resort offers Jawai Bagh, an open-air rustic landscape point where curated lunches, high teas and bush dinners can be arranged for guests. For those seeking a more intimate experience, JUMP-Jawai Under the Moon Point offers a memorable dining experience under the stars. With state-of-the-art amenities and facilities, the resort caters to both leisure guests and corporate & social events. The meeting and banquet facilities include a spacious conference hall and expansive lawns, providing ample options for both intimate gatherings and large-scale events. The resort also offers a variety of outdoor experiences, such as guided leopard safaris and visits to nearby attractions, including the Jawai Bandh Dam, Kambeshwar Mahadev Temple and several other historic sites.



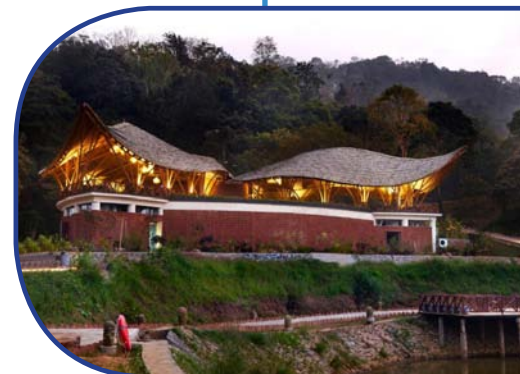
## Club Mahindra Patkote, Jim Corbett

The Club Mahindra Patkote Resort spans across 4.7 acres and features 72 well-appointed rooms, providing a range of thoughtfully curated experiences for guests. From an inviting swimming pool and exquisite dining options to engaging indoor activities and a rejuvenating spa, the resort ensures a perfect blend of adventure and relaxation, making every stay memorable. Conveniently accessible via Pantnagar and Bareilly Airports and Kathgodam and Ramnagar Railway Stations, the resort serves as an easily reachable retreat for travelers seeking tranquillity. The ideal time to visit is between November and February when the region's serene beauty is at its peak.

## Timbertales, Coorg

This much-anticipated retreat with 71 villas, spread across 100 acres, is designed to pamper, soothe, and offer an oasis of serenity for those who seek an escape.

Each of the 71 villas at Timbertales is designed with luxury and comfort in mind, offering a sitting area and a private bedroom. Embrace wellness and tranquility at Viyoma, where nature and tradition unite to rejuvenate your mind and body. The 27,000 sq. ft. centre, which is over three levels, has 25 therapy rooms offering Swedish, Balinese, Ayurvedic, and Aromatherapy treatments. Viyoma also offers the only Turkish Hammam in the region. Guests can also relax in the panoramic sauna, which creates a calm environment with beautiful views of the surrounding landscape. Additionally, Viyoma includes specialized skin and hair care treatments designed to enhance natural beauty and rejuvenation. Understanding that wellness is a necessity in today's fast-paced world, Viyoma expands its services to include wellness for kids that are carefully chosen to help them develop healthy habits from an early age.



## Mikiamo Limoncello Brings Italian Heritage to Indian Shores

India welcomed its first-ever limoncello in May 2024 with the launch of Mikiamo Limoncello, introducing a taste of Italy to Indian palates. Mikiamo Limoncello is made using lemons sourced from Italy's southern coast, famed for their rich zest and vibrant flavor. While the lemon infusion is imported from Italy, bottling is completed in Goa. The result is a bittersweet, citrus-forward liqueur with notes of kaffir lime and lemongrass, offering a smooth and versatile drinking experience. Unlike imported variants, Mikiamo contains no artificial colors or preservatives and uses up to 50% less sugar, catering to those seeking a more refined, natural taste.

Initially launched in Goa, Mikiamo has established its presence across 150 retail outlets, supermarkets, and premium establishments, including four- and five-star hotels, restaurants, and cafes. Priced at INR 2,110 for a 750 ml bottle and INR 500 for a compact 180 ml bottle, Mikiamo offers a competitive alternative to imported limoncellos, priced 30–50% lower.



## Hindware Italian Collection Unveils Smart LED Mirrors

Hindware's Italian Collection of LED mirrors exemplifies this change, offering a combination of innovative technology and minimalist design.

These LED mirrors come equipped with customizable lighting options, catering to various moods and functions. Whether it's a cool white glow for precise grooming, a warm yellow hue for a tranquil atmosphere, or balanced lighting for daily routines, users can effortlessly adjust the ambiance to suit their preferences.

Practicality is also a key feature. The integrated defogger ensures a clear reflection even in the steamiest conditions, while a subtle clock display adds a modern touch of functionality. Intuitive touch controls allow for seamless operation, enhancing the user experience.

Crafted with a durable metal frame and available in multiple sizes, these mirrors combine utility with aesthetic appeal, fitting effortlessly into contemporary bathrooms. Starting at INR 7,990, the collection is accessible through Amazon India, offering a practical yet elegant upgrade to any bathroom space.

## Hafele launches U-Kaffee Coffee Machines

The U-Kaffee and U-Kaffee Plus Coffee Machines feature optimal pump pressure systems for enhanced extraction, ensuring that every cup is brewed to perfection. The U-Kaffee Plus also includes a built-in milk tank, making it easy to create creamy lattes, smooth cappuccinos, and velvety macchiatos without the need for separate frothing tools. Hafele's commitment extends beyond technology, focusing on creating an enriching coffee-making journey. The launch of the Hafele Coffee Circle invites consumers to explore the finer nuances of coffee brewing, from experimenting with premium beans to mastering milk frothing techniques. This initiative aims to inspire coffee lovers to refine their skills and embrace the art of crafting their perfect brew.

As the demand for premium coffee machines grows, Hafele is not only meeting expectations but shaping the future of coffee culture. With the U-Kaffee Coffee Machines and the Hafele Coffee Circle, the brand offers an immersive experience, transforming a daily ritual into a cherished indulgence.



## HYATT HOTELS


**Michael Lestourgeon, Director Operations, Park Hyatt Chennai**

With nearly two decades of experience in luxury hospitality, Michael brings a strong operational focus and a deep commitment to service excellence and guest experience.

Since joining as Director of Sales and Marketing in 2023, Michael has played a key role in strengthening the hotel's market

presence and driving commercial success.

In his expanded role, he will now oversee hotel operations, working closely with teams to enhance efficiency, elevate service standards, and ensure a seamless guest experience. His collaborative leadership and forward-thinking approach align with Park Hyatt Chennai's commitment to refined luxury and personalized hospitality.

## CHALET HOTELS


**Gaurav Singh, Chief Operating Officer, Chalet Hotels Limited**

In his new role, Gaurav will be focusing on asset management, driving operational excellence, ensuring efficiency to strengthen the business and design scalable processes for Chalet Hotels. With a robust portfolio and an ambitious pipeline of additional rooms, Chalet is poised for significant growth, and Gaurav's

leadership backed with 26 years of experience in hospitality will play a crucial role in steering this exciting journey.

## MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL


**Swapnil Nandurkar, Director of Sales, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center**

With over 14 years of distinguished experience in the hospitality industry, Swapnil has been an integral member of the hotel's leadership team, having previously served as the Associate Director of Sales. His extensive career includes roles at prominent global brands such

as Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris, Mumbai & Hyderabad, JW Marriott Pune, where he has consistently demonstrated a passion for excellence, innovation, and business growth. In his new role as Director of Sales, Swapnil will oversee all aspects of the hotel's sales strategy. He will be responsible for budgeting, forecasting, and developing initiatives that enhance brand awareness and the hotel's overall commercial performance. Under his leadership, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield aims to solidify its position as a market leader, increasing market share and continuing its commitment to delivering exceptional service and experiences to guests.

## INTERGLOBE HOTELS


**Vinay Gupta, Vice President of Development & Asset Management, InterGlobe Hotels**

Gupta is a recognized industry veteran with a proven track record of success in diverse markets, including India, the UK, UAE, and Australia. His extensive experience encompasses large-scale operations management, business development, and asset management for prominent

brands such as ibis, Hilton, and SAMHI Hotels.

In his most recent venture, Mr. Gupta founded My Tea Chapel Pvt Ltd, a modern quick-service restaurant (QSR) brand. This entrepreneurial experience honed his skills in financial management, strategic planning, and operational execution. Prior to this, he served as Director of Operations for ibis and ibis Styles India, where he was responsible for optimizing performance across multiple properties and implementing strategic initiatives to enhance guest satisfaction and revenue growth.

## WYNDHAM HOTELS &amp; RESORTS

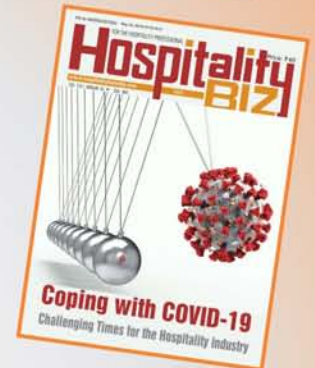

**Rahoal Macarius, Market Managing Director for Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts**

Rahoal will be responsible for regional operations and driving the growth of Wyndham's diverse portfolio of brands across Eurasia covering; India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and the Maldives.

This appointment sees Rahoal Macarius returning to Wyndham, where he was previously Director of commercial for the region. Rahoal brings over 25 years of experience including financial acumen, operational excellence, and stakeholder relationship management, developed through leadership roles at a variety of leading hotel groups.

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## Contact Us

**Ajay Wadode:** +91 80871 27814  
ajay.wadode@saffronsynergies.in

**Jagdish Patil:** +91 8007992422  
jagdish.patil@saffronsynergies.in

**Pooja Nalawade:** +91 9769052241  
pooja.nalawade@saffronsynergies.in

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**Gauri Sawant:** +91 8369080796 | gauri.sawant@saffronsynergies.in