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Hyderabad's food safety crisis deepens as repeated breaches put consumers at risk

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Hyderabad's celebrated food culture is facing a serious hygiene crisis as repeated inspections continue to uncover stale food, pest infestations, rat droppings, mould, expired ingredients and unsafe kitchen practices across restaurants and food establishments. The recurring violations have raised a critical public-health question: how long should consumers continue paying the price for weak compliance?

Recent food safety inspections in Hyderabad have repeatedly exposed disturbing conditions, including stale food, reused cooking oil and unsafe storage practices.

The findings have placed a harsh spotlight on food safety in a city celebrated for its biryani, restaurants and thriving food culture. For consumers, the concern is no longer limited to taste or service. It is about whether the food on the table is safe to eat. According to Food Safety and Standards Authority of India data, Hyderabad ranks lowest among major metropolitan cities in the adoption of food hygiene ratings. Only 361 eateries have obtained hygiene ratings, representing less than 2 per cent of the city's approximately 25,000 licensed food establishments.

The city is estimated to have around 75,000 food outlets in total.

The comparison with other major cities is striking. Delhi has 3,394 establishments under the hygiene rating programme, while Bengaluru has around 2,200. Hyderabad, despite having a food and restaurant industry reportedly worth more than ₹10,000 crore annually, remains far behind. The numbers have become more alarming when viewed alongside recent inspection findings.

Food safety teams inspecting restaurants in Kondapur, Gachibowli and Madinaguda found stale cooked food, cockroaches, rat droppings, mould contaminated vegetables, greasy exhaust systems, open dustbins and poorly maintained kitchens.

At some establishments, raw and cooked meat were stored together. Vegetarian and non vegetarian food was not properly separated. Raw chicken was found stored without adequate wrapping. Prepared food was kept without labels. At one restaurant, inspectors found that cooking oil had reportedly been reused continuously for four days and ordered it to be discarded. These are not merely paperwork violations. Poor storage, pest infestation, contaminated ingredients and unsafe handling can expose customers to foodborne illnesses. A meal bought for a few hundred rupees can potentially end with medical bills, lost working days and serious health complications.

The violations have continued.

Authorities recently ordered the closure of a restaurant in Gachibowli following serious hygiene violations. Inspections at other establishments uncovered expired sauces, pest infested ingredients, housefly infestations, greasy floors, dirty freezers, inadequate ventilation and missing food safety records.

At a hotel in Pocharam, officials discarded around six kilograms of suji after finding it infested with storage pests. At another outlet, sprouted potatoes were removed. Several establishments were unable to produce mandatory records relating to pest control, medical fitness of workers, food testing and water quality. Not every establishment failed inspections. Some outlets recorded high hygiene scores and were found following proper labelling, storage and inventory practices. The contrast shows that maintaining food safety standards is possible when operators make compliance a priority.

The larger concern is the scale of the problem.

Hyderabad has tens of thousands of food businesses, but only a fraction have publicly available hygiene ratings. Consumers often choose where to eat based on taste, price, popularity, social media reviews or ratings on food delivery platforms. None of these necessarily tells a customer what is happening inside the kitchen.

A restaurant can have attractive interiors and thousands of positive online reviews while its storage areas, freezers or food handling practices remain invisible to the public.

The FSSAI hygiene rating programme assesses establishments on cleanliness, food handling, storage and compliance with food safety standards. Businesses meeting the required benchmarks receive ratings that can be displayed for customers.

But participation is not mandatory.

Food safety officials have attributed Hyderabad's poor performance partly to limited interest among restaurant and hotel operators. Authorities have increased training and certification programmes, but adoption remains low. For the customer sitting at a restaurant table, that regulatory gap matters.

Consumers have little way of knowing whether the kitchen preparing their meal was inspected recently, whether pests were found on the premises or whether previous violations were corrected. Food safety authorities say inspections will continue and serious violations can result in closure. Improvement notices have also been issued to establishments ordered to correct deficiencies.

But repeated discoveries across different parts of Hyderabad raise a larger question about whether periodic inspections are enough for a food industry of this size. Hyderabad has built a global reputation around food. That reputation cannot depend on flavour alone.

Behind every inspection report is a customer who may have eaten from that kitchen without knowing what inspectors would later find. Behind every case of stale food, pest infestation or unsafe storage is a potential health risk carried by an unsuspecting diner. ■

IHCL signs 20 hotels, opens 11 in Q1 FY27 expansion push

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Indian Hotels Company Ltd. (IHCL) signed 20 new hotels and opened 11 properties during the first quarter of FY27, taking its overall portfolio to 645 hotels as it advances towards its 700-hotel target under the Accelerate 2030strategy.

The company said its portfolio, as of June 30, 2026, comprised 382 operational hotels and a pipeline of 263 properties. Of the 20 hotel signings during the April-June quarter, 17 were under its growth brands—Gateway, Ginger and Tree of Life.

The new projects are spread across emerging destinations including Bharatpur, Trichy, Sindhudurg, Jawai and Wayanad, while also strengthening IHCL's presence in established markets such as Mumbai, Goa, Agra and Kolkata.

IHCL's flagship Taj brand also crossed a milestone of 150 hotels with three new signings in Dharamshala, Barapani (Meghalaya) and Kusur Valley (Maharashtra). Suma Venkatesh, Executive Vice President – Real Estate & Development, said the company continues to focus on expanding its growth brands while strengthening the Taj portfolio in key leisure destinations.

During the quarter, IHCL expanded internationally by opening Taj Hessischer Hof in Frankfurt and Taj Bush Lodge in Greater Kruger, South Africa. In India, the company opened new hotels under the SeleQtions, Gateway and Gingerbrands across Ayodhya, Mumbai, Kandla, Hyderabad, Agra, Kota, Gadchiroli and Siwan.

IHCL said it remains ontrack to achieve its strategic goal of a 700-hotel portfolio under its Accelerate 2030 roadmap, reinforcing its leadership in India's hospitality sector. ■

Polo Hotels signs first 5-star property in Mizoram

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Polo Hotels &Resorts has announced the signing of Polo Hotel Aizawl, marking its entry into Mizoram and expanding its presence across Northeast India. The project, developed under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model in collaboration with the Government of Mizoram, will redevelop the Chaltlang Tourist Lodge into the state's first 5-star hotel.

The upcoming property will feature premium dining venues, a lounge, a pool area, expansive banquet and meeting facilities, afitness centre, and a swimming pool. The development is expected to strengthen Aizawl's hospitality infrastructure while supporting tourism, employment, and economic growth in the state.

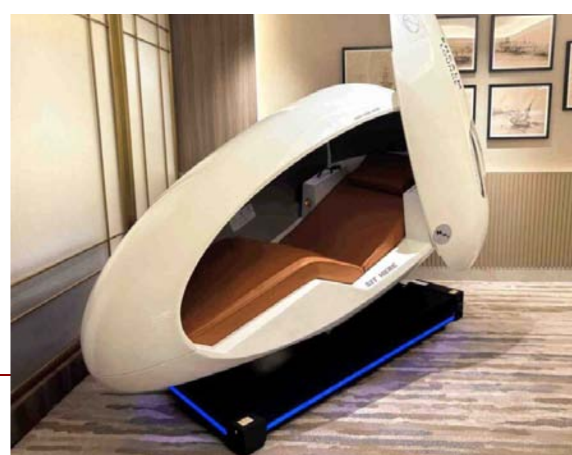
With this signing, Polo Hotels Group's portfolio grows to 16 hotels, including seven under development, reinforcing its position as the Northeast's largest homegrown hospitality company with operations across multiple Indian states. ■

Encalm Hospitality opens new International Lounge in Hyderabad

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Encalm HospitalityHospitality has expanded its airport hospitality portfolio with the launch of a new International Lounge at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad. Designed for modern travellers, the lounge combines comfort, wellness, and premium dining to deliver an elevated pre-flight experience. The facility features sleeping pods, spa treatments, live culinary stations, a private dining room, and a well-stocked bar, catering to the diverse needs of international passengers. The lounge offers a mix of local and global cuisines alongside wellness-focused amenities to enhance traveller convenience and relaxation.

With this launch, Encalm continuescontinues to strengthen its integrated airport hospitality ecosystem, focusing on innovative, guest-centric experiences that redefine airport travel through thoughtfully designed spaces and premium services. ■



IHCL plans INR 7,500-crore Capex, Taj Bandstand to soar 50 floors

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) will invest between ₹6,000 crore and ₹7,500 crore in capital expenditure over the next five years as it accelerates its expansion strategy, with the upcoming Taj Bandstand in Mumbai emerging as its flagship development.

Speaking at the company's Annual General Meeting (AGM), N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Group and Non-Executive Director of IHCL, said the proposed 50-storey, 500-room Taj Bandstand will involve an investment of around ₹2,000 crore.

"We hope it will be an iconic property," Chandrasekaran said, outlining the company's long-term investment roadmap.

The Taj Bandstand project is expected to become one of Mumbai's most prominent luxury hospitality developments, reinforcing IHCL's focus on expanding its premium portfolio amid rising demand for luxury accommodation, business travel and destination experiences.

Chandrasekaran said IHCL's current capital expenditure plan envisages investments ranging from ₹6,000 crore to ₹7,500 crore over the next five years, supporting the company's continued network expansion and asset development strategy.

The investment programme aligns with IHCL's broader growth ambitions as India's largest hospitality company, with the group continuing to add new hotels across luxury, upscale and lean-luxe segments while strengthening its presence in key business, leisure and emerging destinations.

The planned Taj Bandstand is expected to become a landmark addition to Mumbai's luxury hotel landscape, reflecting continued confidence in the long-term growth potential of India's hospitality sector. ■

TEACH conclave highlights hospitality career opportunities

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The Telangana Association of Educators in Culinary and Hospitality (TEACH), comprising colleges affiliated with Osmania University, organised a conclave titled 'Hotel Management and Culinary Arts – Gateway to Global Careers' in Hyderabad to promote hospitality education and create awareness about career opportunities in the sector.

The initiative brought together students, parents, educators and career counsellors to discuss the growing demand for skilled professionals in hospitality and culinary arts, while highlighting the industry's expanding global employment prospects.

Osmania University, through its Faculty of Technology, has been offering professional hospitality degree programmes for over three decades, with 16 affiliated colleges currently delivering hotel management and culinary education.

Addressing the conclave, Prof. Kumar Molugaram, Vice-Chancellor, Osmania University, said Telangana has significant untapped hospitality potential despite having only 23 five-star hotels, compared with Kerala, which has the highest number among Indian states.

Industry representatives also highlighted Hyderabad's emerging position as a hospitality investment destination. Raj Bhattacharya, Director of Sales and Marketing, Radisson Blu Hotels, noted that several international hotel brands are actively evaluating expansion opportunities in the city, driven by its growing business and tourism ecosystem.

Speaking on tourism's growth potential, Chef Amey Marathe, President, Telangana Chefs Association (TCA), pointed to the gap between India's international tourist arrivals and leading global destinations, underscoring the need to strengthen hospitality infrastructure and develop skilled talent.

Saka Sudha Kumar, President, TEACH, said the association serves as a consortium of Osmania University-affiliated hotel management colleges, working to enhance industry-academia collaboration and promote hospitality as a viable career choice.

The conclave reinforced the importance of industry engagement, skill development and academic collaboration in preparing the next generation of hospitality professionals to meet the sector's evolving workforce requirements.. ■

The secret ingredient !

Remember when eating out was an occasion? Today, it is almost a reflex. A long meeting calls for a quick lunch, a lazy Sunday means ordering in, and a celebration is just another restaurant reservation away. Food has become one of life's easiest conveniences. We hardly think twice before placing an order.

Maybe it is time we did.

The recent food safety inspections in Hyderabad have left many diners with an uncomfortable aftertaste. What made the findings even more unsettling was that many of the restaurants under the scanner were popular names that people happily queue up for and don't mind paying a premium to dine at or order from. We often assume that a bigger brand and a bigger bill automatically mean better standards. The inspections told a different story. Expired ingredients, unhygienic kitchens, pest infestations and poor food handling proved that hygiene cannot be taken for granted, no matter how fancy the menu or how expensive the meal. While the revelations were difficult to digest, the inspections themselves deserve appreciation for bringing these issues to light. They showed that someone is looking beyond the menu and into the kitchen.

Now imagine, if every state followed Hyderabad's lead.

Food safety should not become a talking point only after a viral video or an inspection raid. Regular checks, strict follow up and greater transparency should be a routine to follow across India. If a restaurant repeatedly fails to meet food safety standards, customers deserve to know what action has been taken. Have the issues been fixed? Has the licence been suspended? Or has business simply carried on as usual?

For restaurants, this is not just about ticking regulatory boxes. Every plate served carries a promise that the food is safe to eat. That promise is worth far more than clever marketing campaigns or social media buzz. The hospitality industry has earned its place in our daily lives. It now has an opportunity to strengthen the confidence that comes with it. Hyderabad has shown that inspections can spark important conversations. The hope is that other states take the cue, not because they have to, but because every diner, no matter which city they are in, deserves the same assurance that their food is safe.

After all, the secret ingredient every restaurant should serve is trust.

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‘Plating isn’t decoration, it’s a pricing tool’

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Culinary Journey

Chef Siddharth Vasudev, Executive Chef at The Tivoli Hotels, has spent years mastering international cuisines while developing a philosophy that blends creativity with commercial thinking.

A graduate of the Institute of Hotel Management, he began his career with Grand Hyatt before building his expertise at Jaypee Vasant Continental, Carnival Cruise Line, The Grand New Delhi and Crowne Plaza New Delhi. Each role broadened his perspective, from refining global culinary techniques to understanding the operational realities of running successful hotel kitchens. Reflecting on his journey, Chef Vasudev said his growth has been driven by a strong foundation in classical techniques and an eagerness to keep learning.

“My culinary journey has been shaped by a mix of classical training, hands-on experience, and continuous curiosity. I started in entry-level kitchen roles, where I built a strong foundation in technique, discipline, and respect for ingredients. Over time, working across different cuisines and kitchen environments helped me develop versatility and a deeper understanding of flavours, presentation, and operations,” he said.

Smart Menus

For Chef Vasudev, running a successful hotel kitchen today is about much more than serving exceptional food. It requires balancing guest expectations with operational efficiency while making informed business decisions. He informed that hotels should embrace global food trends without losing sight of local ingredients and regional identity.

“If plant-based dining is trending globally, there’s no need to depend on imported substitutes. Regional produce, legumes and grains can deliver the same experience while keeping costs under control,” he explained.

He also believes menu engineering is one of the most effective tools for improving profitability. Instead of treating every dish as a standalone creation, ingredients should work across multiple recipes to minimise waste and maximise efficiency.

“High-cost ingredients should be used strategically, while sauces, garnishes and bases can be shared across dishes. It helps control food costs, simplifies kitchen operations and improves margins without making the menu repetitive,” he said.

Visual Value

Presentation, according to Chef Vasudev, directly influences how guests perceive value.

“Plating isn’t decoration—it’s a pricing tool. When a dish looks intentional and balanced, guests naturally perceive greater value,” he said. He believes thoughtful use of colour, negative space and structured presentation can elevate the dining experience without increasing food costs. Consistency, he stressed, is equally important, ensuring every plate reflects the same quality and attention to detail.

Guest Loyalty

While restaurants constantly chase new trends, Chef Vasudev believes lasting success comes from giving guests a reason to return.

He pointed to hyper-local storytelling, seasonal menu rotations, experiential dining, personalised offerings and signature dishes as strategies that create stronger emotional connections than short-lived food fads. Strong beverage programmes and transparent sustainability practices, he added, further strengthen a hotel’s food and beverage identity in an increasingly competitive market.

Future Focus

Beyond the menu, Chef Vasudev sees collaborations as an important avenue for growth. Partnerships with local farmers, artisanal producers, guest chefs and beverage brands not only refresh the dining experience but also introduce new audiences while strengthening a property’s culinary identity.

“The goal is to extend your reach, increase guest spending and make better use of your existing spaces. Collaborations should create value, not just publicity,” he noted.

At a time when rising food costs, labour shortages and evolving guest expectations continue to challenge the hospitality industry, Chef Vasudev believes sustainable growth depends on smarter sourcing, seasonal ingredients, tighter inventory control and reducing waste through better utilisation of every ingredient.

“Guests today expect quality, speed, value and personalisation all at once. Meeting those expectations while remaining profitable requires discipline, data-driven decisions and continuous innovation,” he said.

For Chef Siddharth Vasudev, the future of food and beverage lies in combining culinary excellence with sound business strategy. Every successful menu, he believes, is more than a collection of dishes—it is a thoughtfully designed experience that delights guests while driving long-term business growth. ■

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News Bulletin

Chhattisgarh backs Mahua heritage liquor industry push

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

The Chhattisgarh government has approved a policy framework to develop mahua-based heritage liquor as an organised industry, positioning the indigenous spirit as a commercial beverage while creating new income opportunities for tribal communities.

The decision, cleared during a high-level review meeting chaired by the Chief Secretary, directs officials to classify mahua-based liquor manufacturing units on par with agro-processing industries under the state's industrial policy. The move is expected to formalise production, attract private investment and strengthen value addition around one of the state's most abundant non-timber forest products.

Under the proposed model, private entrepreneurs will establish and operate liquor manufacturing units, while the state government will facilitate marketing, licensing and banking support. The Chhattisgarh State Minor Forest Produce (Trading & Development) Cooperative Federation has been appointed as the nodal agency to implement the initiative.

The federation will undertake a feasibility study covering raw material availability, minimum viable production volumes, supply chain economics and market potential before inviting expressions of interest (EOIs) from investors. Participating entrepreneurs will be required to declare procurement prices for mahua flowers, ensuring transparency in sourcing from tribal collectors.

The government has clarified that no incentives beyond those available under the existing industrial policy will be extended to investors.

Industry observers believe the initiative could create opportunities for India's premium spirits, tourism and hospitality sectors, as heritage liquors gain traction among experiential travellers seeking authentic regional food and beverage experiences. The policy also aligns with the growing consumer demand for indigenous craft spirits with traceable origins.

According to tribal rights advocate Shubhranshu Choudhary, government-backed branding and marketing of mahua liquor through tribal cooperatives could significantly improve incomes for women engaged in mahua collection.

The state is also planning an investors' summit to attract industry participation, signalling its intent to position mahua as Chhattisgarh's flagship heritage beverage while strengthening the tribal economy through organised value-chain development.. ■

In an industry where rapid expansion is often fuelled by external capital, **Prajwal Lokesh** has charted a different course. As the Founder and **CEO of Lokesh Hospitality**, he has built one of Bengaluru's most recognised independent hospitality groups by focusing on sustainable growth, operational excellence and experience-led concepts. From reviving iconic establishments like Chin Lung and Kalinga to creating contemporary destinations that resonate with today's consumers, Lokesh has successfully blended the city's rich hospitality heritage with evolving dining preferences. In an exclusive conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee**, Prajwal Lokesh shares his insights on scaling a founder-led business.

'Being self-funded instils discipline and accountability'

What have been the key business principles and growth strategies that enabled this scale while remaining founder-led?

At the heart of our growth has been a simple belief: build businesses that people genuinely want to return to. We have never chased scale for the sake of expansion. Instead, our focus has always been on creating memorable guest experiences, maintaining strong operational discipline, and nurturing teams that take pride in hospitality. Being founder-led allows us to stay closely connected to every aspect of the business, from concept development to guest feedback. It gives us the flexibility to make long-term decisions that strengthen the brand rather than pursuing short-term gains. Every new venture is approached with patience and purpose, ensuring that growth never comes at the cost of quality, authenticity, or guest trust.

You have successfully revived iconic Bengaluru establishments such as Chin Lung and Kalinga while also building contemporary concepts. How do you identify opportunities that balance heritage with changing consumer preferences?

For us, heritage is not just about preserving a name; it's about protecting the emotions and memories associated with it. Brands like Chin Lung and Kalinga have a deep connection with Bengaluru's social and cultural fabric, and that responsibility is something we take seriously. At the same time, hospitality must evolve alongside changing lifestyles and expectations. We spend a lot of time understanding guest behaviour, travelling, observing global trends, and learning from different markets.

What trends are currently shaping Bengaluru's food and beverage sector, and how is Lokesh Hospitality positioning itself to stay ahead?

Bengaluru's dining landscape has matured significantly over the past decade. Guests today are looking beyond food and beverages; they seek experiences, authenticity, and a sense of connection with the brands they engage with. There is growing appreciation for craft beverages, locally inspired concepts, community-driven spaces, and venues with a strong identity. Consumers are more informed, more adventurous, and more selective than ever before. Our focus is on creating brands with distinct personalities and genuine stories rather than simply following trends. We listen closely to our guests, adapt where necessary, and continue investing in experiences that encourage people to stay longer, connect deeper, and keep coming back.

As a self-funded hospitality group, how do you approach investments in new properties and concepts?

Being self-funded instils a strong sense of discipline and accountability. Every investment must make sense not only financially but also strategically and culturally. When evaluating opportunities, we look beyond footfalls and real estate metrics. We assess the character of the neighbourhood, the long-term potential of the location, operational feasibility, and whether the property aligns with the vision of the concept we want to create. Most importantly, we ask ourselves whether the space has the potential to become a destination that people form an emotional connection with. Hospitality is a long-term business, and every investment decision reflects that philosophy.. ■

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'We see significant opportunities in experiential hospitality'

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

The traditional playbook of filling rooms and maximising occupancy is beginning to lose its dominance in India's luxury hospitality sector as changing consumer preferences force hotels to rethink how they generate revenue. While occupancy, Average Daily Rate (ADR) and Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) remain the industry's benchmark indicators, evolving demand for experiential dining, wellness, entertainment, destination weddings and blended business-leisure travel is steadily reshaping commercial strategies. In Bengaluru, one of the country's most competitive hotel markets, operators are increasingly diversifying beyond room sales, with ancillary businesses emerging as critical profit centres. According to **Sushma Khichar, General Manager of Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway**, the property's performance over the past year reflects this transition, with growth being driven by a balanced mix of corporate travel, MICE, destination dining, social celebrations and leisure demand rather than any single business segment.

"The past year has been a strong one for us, with positive momentum across all key performance indicators. Growth has come from a balanced business mix spanning corporate travel, MICE, social celebrations, destination dining and leisure stays," she says. Rather than chasing occupancy at the expense of rates, Khichar says the hotel's commercial strategy has centred on disciplined revenue management, premium positioning and experience-led offerings.

"Experience-led packages, strategic partnerships and the Marriott Bonvoy ecosystem have supported our commercial performance. The key is adapting to evolving guest expectations while consistently delivering personalised hospitality," she adds.

That approach reflects a broader trend across India's premium hospitality sector, where hotels are looking beyond rooms to improve margins. According to Khichar, for Sheraton Grand Bangalore, food and beverage, banqueting and events have emerged as the largest contributors to non-room revenues. Restaurants continue to attract both resident guests and Bengaluru's local dining audience, while conferences, government events and large weddings remain significant demand generators.

"Food and beverage, banqueting and events continue to be our strongest non-room revenue streams," Khichar says. "While wellness, lifestyle experiences and curated stay packages are also growing steadily as guests increasingly look for integrated hospitality experiences beyond accommodation."

This evolution is particularly evident in Bengaluru, where luxury hotels increasingly compete not only with one another but also with standalone restaurants, premium event venues and lifestyle destinations. Instead of relying on room discounts to remain competitive, operators are now focusing on protecting pricing power by offering various differentiated experiences.

"Maintaining pricing power requires delivering differentiated value rather than competing on price alone," Khichar explains. "Our focus is on exceptional guest experiences, premium dining, entertainment and service excellence, while maintaining a balanced mix across corporate, leisure, MICE and social segments."

She adds that leveraging Marriott Bonvoy's global distribution network, long-standing corporate relationships and data-driven revenue management helps optimise occupancy without compromising rate integrity in one of India's most competitive hotel markets.

Changing traveller behaviour is also forcing hotels to rethink their commercial strategies.

Business travel is no longer limited to meetings and conferences. Increasingly, guests are extending work trips into leisure breaks, while leisure travellers expect hotels to offer more than accommodation.

"Today's guests seek flexibility, personalisation and meaningful experiences," says Khichar. "Business travellers increasingly combine work with leisure, while leisure guests expect immersive dining, wellness and destination-led experiences."

To address these shifts, the hotel has expanded curated staycation packages, experiential dining programmes, flexible meeting formats and personalised loyalty-led offerings designed around different traveller segments, informs Khichar.

F&B has become one of the biggest battlegrounds in the premium hospitality space. Rather than functioning simply as hotel restaurants, luxury hotel outlets are increasingly positioning themselves as independent lifestyle destinations capable of attracting local patrons throughout the week. Khichar says the hotel has invested heavily in chef collaborations, regional food festivals, immersive menus, curated beverage programmes, influencer partnerships and entertainment-led programming to keep its restaurants relevant. "Our approach is centred on creating experiences rather than simply offering dining options," she says. "These initiatives drive repeat visits, strengthen brand recall and contribute meaningfully to profitability."

She points to High Ultra Lounge as an example of how destination dining and nightlife can complement the traditional hotel business, alongside the property's other restaurants and seasonal culinary concepts.

Location also continues to play an important role in winning corporate business. Situated within Brigade Gateway, with access to the World Trade Centre, Orion Mall and major business districts, the hotel benefits from an ecosystem that serves business travellers, international visitors and leisure guests alike. "Our strength lies in offering a complete hospitality ecosystem under one roof," Khichar says. "Our meeting facilities, dining destinations, wellness offerings and global loyalty platform together create a compelling proposition."

Internally, however, she believes sustainable growth depends as much on people as on pricing strategies. "My focus is on balancing commercial performance with people development and guest satisfaction," she says. "Revenue optimisation today goes beyond pricing. It is about strengthening every revenue stream while investing in associates through continuous learning, leadership development and an inclusive workplace culture."

Down the line, Khichar expects experiential hospitality to remain one of the fastest-growing segments of the luxury hotel market. "We see significant opportunities in experiential hospitality, destination dining, entertainment, premium social celebrations and bleisure travel. Sustainability, digital innovation and personalised guest engagement will also play an increasingly important role. As Bengaluru continues to evolve as a global business and lifestyle hub, we remain focused on delivering experiences that create lasting value for our guests, associates, and stakeholders."

She concludes by saying, "Our priorities are to continue growing across rooms, food and beverage, events and wellness, As Bengaluru evolves, we remain focused on delivering experiences that create long-term value for guests while building a sustainable business." ■

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‘Our vision is to build one of India’s leading foodservice equipment companies’

India’s hospitality and foodservice sectors continue to expand at an unprecedented pace, the demand for advanced commercial kitchens, refrigeration solutions, and technology-driven equipment has never been greater. From hotels and restaurants to QSRs, cafés, cloud kitchens, and bakeries, operational efficiency, consistency, and sustainability are becoming central to business success. In an exclusive conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee, Neeraj Seth, Co-Founder & Managing Director of Trufrost & Butler**, reflects on his entrepreneurial journey after Celfrost, the evolution of India’s foodservice equipment industry, and how Trufrost & Butler is helping shape the next generation of hospitality infrastructure.

What inspired you to launch Trufrost & Butler after your successful journey with Celfrost?

Our decision to launch Trufrost & Butler was driven by a imple observation: despite the rapid expansion of India’s hospitality and foodservice sector, many of the industry’s core operational challenges remained unresolved. After building and scaling Celfrost, we spent time understanding how the market had evolved and whether customer expectations had shifted. What became evident was that operators across restaurants, cafés, bakeries, and hotels were still grappling with issues such as inconsistent product quality, dependence on skilled manpower, limited access to reliable equipment, and inadequate service support. We saw an opportunity to build a company that would go beyond equipment distribution and become a long-term solutions partner for the foodservice industry. That vision ultimately led to the creation of Trufrost & Butler in 2018.

How has the commercial refrigeration and foodservice equipment industry evolved since you started your entrepreneurial journey?

The industry has undergone a significant transformation, largely driven by the rapid expansion of India’s hospitality, café, restaurant, and food delivery ecosystem. Foodservice businesses today are far more organised, scalable, and process-driven. At the same time, customer expectations have evolved considerably. Operators are now looking beyond basic equipment functionality and focusing on consistency, efficiency, technology integration, and service reliability. Features such as recipe programming, IoT connectivity, predictive maintenance alerts, and remote diagnostics enable customers to reduce operational variability and improve efficiency across locations. Another major shift is the growing emphasis on local manufacturing, driven by initiatives such as Make in India and the implementation of BIS standards across various equipment categories. This is creating new opportunities for domestic manufacturing and raising quality benchmarks across the industry.

What gap in the market was Trufrost & Butler created to address?

The market traditionally offered two extremes: premium imported equipment, often expensive, and low-cost alternatives that invariably compromised on reliability and after-sales support. We identified a clear need for a middle path.

Trufrost & Butler was created to provide high-quality, technology-enabled equipment, backed by dependable service, at a price point that suits growing businesses. Beyond products, we wanted to help operators achieve consistency across locations, improve productivity, and reduce operational dependence on individual skill sets. Our focus has always been on delivering complete end-to-end solutions rather than simply selling equipment.

How do you ensure that your products are specifically suited to Indian operating conditions and the hospitality environment?

One of our key focus areas has always been adapting global technologies to local operating conditions. Indian foodservice operators face challenges such as voltage fluctuations, high ambient temperatures, humidity, and demanding transport conditions. Our products, such as Soft Serve Freezers, Visi Coolers, Blast Chillers, Conveyor Pizza Ovens, and others, are designed and configured to meet these conditions, delivering reliable performance even in challenging environments. The foodservice environment has been crying out for consistency; that's one of the industry's biggest pain points. Consistency in food output and beverage output is critical. To address this, a tremendous amount of technology has gone into the development of modern equipment. We ensure that our products incorporate contemporary technology, enabling businesses to deliver consistent quality and performance

Which product categories are currently driving the strongest demand across hotels, restaurants, cafés, and QSRs?

Quite frankly, all of the above. The hospitality sector is experiencing growth across all segments. Hotels are coming up not just in major business hubs, but also in remote locations, driven in part by the rise in religious tourism and better road connectivity. We're seeing the expansion of both boutique properties and large hotel chains, so growth is happening across the board. The restaurant segment is equally dynamic. Pizzerias, Burger QSRs, Biryani QSRs, and Coffee Chains are expanding rapidly, creating strong demand for equipment such as Pizza Stone Ovens, Blast Chillers/Shock Freezers, and more. Food delivery continues to broaden its footprint, while more airports mean more food courts, and highway restaurants and rest stops are upgrading their offerings. Bakeries, too, are receiving a significant boost across the country, driving the adoption of specialised bakery equipment. So, I would say every segment of the foodservice and hospitality industry is experiencing strong growth.

Trufrost & Butler represents several global brands alongside its own portfolio. How do you balance international innovation with local market needs?

I think we've been doing this consistently, even with our own homegrown brands, Trufrost and Butler. We've primarily curated solutions suited to Indian conditions by collaborating with highly validated OEMs from across the globe, including Europe and the Far East. Similarly, the international brands we have recently started distributing, such as Rational from Germany, UNOX from Italy, Prática from Brazil, and Coffee Machine brands like Victoria Arduino, La Cimbali, and Elektra from Italy, are all globally renowned players. We have worked closely with them to adapt their products to Indian operating conditions. Not only that, many of these products are now manufactured or locally assembled at our Bhiwandi facility in collaboration with our international partners. Together, we have also secured BIS certification across several product categories. So, whether it is our own brands, Trufrost and Butler, or the international brands we distribute in India, we hold all of them to the same high standards of quality, performance, and reliability.

What are your investment and expansion plans for the brand?

Our current investment priorities are centred on manufacturing, service infrastructure, and market expansion. A significant portion of the recently raised capital is being deployed to strengthen our manufacturing capabilities through our Bhiwandi facility. At the same time, we are investing in technical talent, training programmes, spare parts availability, digital systems, and service excellence. Geographically, we continue to deepen our presence across India, particularly in emerging Tier II, Tier III, and Tier IV markets, while expanding our international footprint in neighbouring countries and exploring opportunities in the Middle East and Africa.

What is your vision for Trufrost & Butler over the next five years?

Our vision is to build one of India's leading companies in foodservice equipment and commercial refrigeration, supported by strong manufacturing capabilities, world-class service standards, and a growing international presence. We see significant opportunities driven by the continued growth of the hospitality, food processing, QSR, retail, cloud kitchens, and cold-chain infrastructure sectors. By investing in manufacturing, technology, talent, and exports, we aim to build a scalable organisation to support the next phase of growth in India's foodservice ecosystem.

How does the Bhiwandi facility strengthen Trufrost & Butler's long-term vision for the Indian market?

The Bhiwandi facility is a key element of our long-term manufacturing strategy and reflects our commitment to the Make in India vision. It enables us to manufacture and assemble high-quality foodservice and commercial refrigeration equipment locally, improving supply reliability and reducing dependence on imports. ■

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INR 36,564 crore hotel deal pipeline signals investor confidence: Report

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

India's hospitality sector is undergoing a structural transformation, with hotels emerging as a mainstream investment asset rather than merely an operating business, according to NOESIS' latest report, The Art & Science of Buying and Selling Hotels. The study highlights a transaction database of approximately 125 hotel deals, covering 37,847 room keys and ₹36,564 crore in disclosed transaction value, translating into an average ₹0.97 crore per key.

Luxury hotels dominated transaction value at ₹22,033 crore across 29 deals, while the midscale segment led activity with 48 transactions involving 14,903 keys, reflecting rising investor interest in scalable assets. Institutional investors accounted for the largest capital deployment, investing ₹21,812 crore across 20,618 keys, followed by hotel companies with ₹6,631 crore.

The report identifies post-2019 acquisitions spanning operating hotels, distressed NCLT assets, brownfield projects, land-linked developments and portfolio transactions, signalling a broader range of entry strategies for investors.

India's macroeconomic expansion is reinforcing the sector's outlook. Real GDP growth is estimated at 7-7.5% annually, while GDP per capita has crossed US$2,700, supporting stronger domestic travel, higher discretionary spending and a growing

SEGMENT-LEVEL TRANSACTION BEHAVIOUR

Segment	No. of Transactions	Keys Transacted	Reported Value	Implied Value per Key
Luxury	29	13,155	INR 22,033 crore	INR 1.68 crore
Upper Upscale	8	1,548	INR 1,474 crore	INR 0.95 crore
Upscale	28	6,216	INR 5,348 crore	INR 0.86 crore
Midscale	8	1,519	INR 785 crore	INR 0.52 crore
Budget	48	14,903	INR 5,639 crore	INR 0.38 crore

Note: The segment-level table excludes four transactions where segment classification was not available.

investor base. Industry leaders expect branded hotel users to increase from around 5 million households today to nearly 30 million by 2030.

The report cautions that acquisition decisions should extend beyond headline pricing to evaluate occupancy, ADR, RevPAR, GOP margins, capital expenditure, debt servicing capacity and legal obligations. It also recommends maintaining a 3-5% reserve for replacement and structuring financing conservatively to protect cash flows.

NOESIS concludes that India's next hospitality growth cycle will be driven by airport corridors, industrial hubs, pilgrimage centres, wedding destinations and mixed-use developments, with disciplined capital allocation and market-led planning emerging as the defining factors for long-term investment success. ■

BUYER UNIVERSE AND CAPITAL BEHAVIOUR

Buyer Type	No. of Transactions	Keys Transacted	Reported Value
Institutional investors	24	20,618	INR 21,812 crore
Hotel operators / hotel companies	47	8,380	INR 6,631 crore
Developers / property companies	32	5,095	INR 3,979 crore
High net worth individuals	12	1,914	INR 2,061 crore
Corporates	7	1,434	INR 1,547 crore

Note: The segment-level table excludes three transactions where segment classification was not available

MARKET CONCENTRATION AND LOCATION SIGNALS

Market / Region	No. of Transactions	Keys Transacted	Reported Value
Pan-India portfolios	10	17,259	INR 15,095 crore
Bengaluru	14	2,878	INR 3,722 crore
NCR	16	3,217	INR 3,506 crore
Mumbai	11	3,427	INR 3,223 crore
Chennai	9	2,068	INR 2,750 crore
Goa	6	1,003	INR 2,011 crore

Note: This table reflects selected high-concentration markets and does not represent the full transaction universe.

Geo-Political Challenges | Opportunities To Enhance Domestic Discoveries 2026

By **Prof. Satish Jayaram,** PhD – Co-Creator | Cornell Certified CHRO Leader | Principal WGSHA

The jokes, memes and television clutter are just a small indication of the real geo-political effects on our already exciting lives in the country. Everything from sourcing material to domestic fuel or gasoline to travel have but one standard refrain. And in this piece, I present a few perspectives on looking at things differently; when the strait does not remain straight. Some early displacement data, nearly 10% reductions in international travel have the potential to raise domestic travel by 35%. Now that must sound like good news to many internal service providers. They make our chaotic yet exciting domestic travel experiences worth the money and value we derive. So let us focus on three themes and their implications; logistics & transportation, bang for the buck experiences and last but not the least the pride of discovering the bounty of domestic get-aways. Some I have recently remained agog by closer to my workplace – beaches, bountiful ingredients, celebrated cultures and a lifestyle to create envy!

1. **Air Travel Surges Vs Roading Discovery:** Aggregators, distribution champions and demand drivers are creaming the market. When air-traffic volumes are driven up by 7% despite the inclement weather, remarkable train journeys especially with the new set of affordable and accessible options are worth their while. The journeys are breathtaking, the drives are fulfilling and if you have the appetite for the weather, road discoveries open new vistas like never before. The quality of roads on most mainstream routes remains world-class. And with hybrid automobiles, can stretch your mileage on the road. Drive only between sunrise to sunset and discover a world that trounces the value of air-travel or carbon miles despite the increase in fuel costs, that let you drive more at similar rates. Pace, time and distance are truly luxuries!
2. **Currency Purchase Parity Vs Overleveraging FOREX:** After multiple debates to invest foreign exchange given current valuations, irrespective of any part of the world, value for money (VFM) in India remains unchallenged. Planning, curation and selection take effort; but while hotel rooms/airline prices gallop ahead (good news), a new source of bespoke accommodations, off-the-beaten-path-home stays and villas lend an authenticity that are not linked to fixed check-in and check-out times. The joy of independence and discovery without having to rush to meet a buffet closing deadline are invaluable. A kitchenette, supplies and even domestic support cost a fraction of what one would pay offshore. Truly negligible, comparing FOREX one spends abroad, a range of VFM experiences available here are stunning.
3. **Domestic Pride Vs Global Bragging:** Domestic discoveries bring an astounding sense of diversity in many ways familiar, but distinctly different in our local contexts. While hospitality benchmarks have largely remained global standards, authentic local experiences can give any self-respecting tradition abroad - a run for the money, pun intended. Global holiday bragging has always been a means to establish standards, but it is worthwhile thinking about the things that matter; sustainability, local cultures, geographical nuances and social influences. A discovery of our own hidden community traditions and practices is enriching, not to undermine best-in-class performances. Global bragging at that price point versus the surging aspiration of an emerging economic order to experience leisure are points worth considering.

To summarize, time does not wait, it is vital not to devalue moments. Geo-political shifts, an emerging world order and seasonal influences are dynamic. They are not here to stay, perceptibly cause some re-arrangement and temporary disorder. But thriving on this chaos requires the ability to find opportunity in challenges. Alternate routes, new methodologies and a refreshing change in mindset will enable the sector to deal with what stands at the door today. Students with fixed schedules and summer vacations need to make sense of that precise time window. And if flights become expensive or hotel rooms become unaffordable, a large volume of business is voting with its feet. Changing expectations, enhanced desires and the FOMO of life are important psychographic elements. Our audiences are creative and will shift to the next best alternative. The key question for us to answer is whether we can demonstrate the same degree of dynamism - in rerouting where that share of the wallet will travel. Geo-politics aside, the economics of the cash register is the only truth that matters! ■

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

Amit Bagga, Co-founder and CEO, Daryaganj

Daryaganj doubles down on premiumisation with GOLD

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

India's restaurant industry has embraced premiumisation over the past few years. From chef-led tasting menus to experiential dining spaces, consumers are increasingly willing to pay for ambience as much as the food. Yet one category has largely remained outside this transformation: classic North Indian cuisine.

Amit Bagga, co-founder and CEO of Daryaganj believes it is time to change that. With the launch of Daryaganj GOLD, the restaurant chain is betting that Butter Chicken, Dal Makhani and Kebabs deserve the same premium setting that diners have come to associate with modern Indian or global cuisines. The move comes as the company crosses INR 100 crore in annual recurring revenue (ARR) and prepares for its next phase of expansion in India and overseas.

For Bagga, the idea stemmed from a simple observation.

"Classic North Indian cuisine is rarely given a true luxury platform. Most restaurants serving this cuisine operate in casual dining formats, while luxury spaces are usually reserved for modern Indian or global cuisines. We wanted to celebrate India's culinary techniques and culture in a more elevated way," he said.

That thinking has shaped every aspect of the new format. At Daryaganj GOLD, the kitchen is not hidden behind closed doors. The tandoors take centre stage, finished in gold plating, while the restaurant itself is designed as a 150-seater with spacious private dining rooms, a scale the brand had never attempted before.

The decision was driven as much by customers as by market opportunity. Existing Daryaganj outlets, Bagga said, had simply become too small for growing demand.

"Guests were constantly asking for larger tables and spaces to celebrate together. We were often unable to accommodate bigger groups because demand exceeded our seating capacity. Daryaganj GOLD was created so guests no longer have to compromise," he explained. Interestingly, the premium concept was first introduced in Bangkok before arriving in India. The international launch allowed the company to experiment with local ingredients while retaining the brand's identity.

"The idea was never to change the cuisine, but to express it in a way that respected both the local context and our brand's values," Bagga said.

That flexibility will continue to define Daryaganj's overseas expansion. Rather than pushing a single format across markets, the company plans to tailor its offering based on local consumer preferences. "Whether we introduce Daryaganj GOLD or our regular format will depend entirely on the location, the country and what the market demands," he said.

The company's growth story has been built less on rapid expansion and more on repeat customers. Every outlet has remained profitable, while same-store sales have grown consistently over the past seven years. Bagga points to the Aerocity restaurant, which is also the brand's first outlet stating that at the moment, the outlet generates nearly 180% of the revenue it recorded in its opening year.

"Customer experience has been our biggest growth driver. It has translated into strong guest loyalty, repeat visits and sustained growth across all our restaurants," he said.

Institutional funding has also played a role in preparing the business for scale. Backing from ANICUT Capital, Daryaganj's first institutional investor, has helped strengthen operations, hiring and internal systems as the company gears up for expansion.

Maintaining consistency across locations, however, remains a priority. From standardised recipes to tightly managed sourcing, the company has invested heavily in processes that ensure diners receive the same experience regardless of where they visit.

Down the line, Daryaganj expects to grow revenue by at least 25% to around INR 125 crore next financial year. Its immediate focus remains Delhi NCR and North India, with Mumbai and Bengaluru on the horizon.

However, Daryaganj GOLD is about more than opening another premium restaurant, for Bagga. It is an attempt to shift perceptions around one of India's most familiar cuisines.

"We want classic North Indian dining to stand confidently alongside any modern dining concept. Whether it's a young diner or an international guest, choosing a traditional North Indian restaurant should feel just as aspirational as choosing any global dining destination," he said.

As India's premium dining market continues to evolve, Daryaganj is making a case that heritage cuisine simply needs a stage worthy of its legacy. ■

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Mixed Use Hospitality Revolution

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

There was a time when hotels were simply one element within a mixed-use development, sitting alongside retail, offices and residences. Today, that equation is changing rapidly. Hospitality is no longer an add-on. It is becoming the force that shapes how these developments are planned, how people interact with them and ultimately how they perform financially.

Across India's urban centres, developers are rethinking the role of hotels, restaurants, wellness spaces and entertainment. Rather than creating places people visit for a single purpose, they are building destinations where work, leisure, shopping and social experiences blend seamlessly. In Hyderabad, Mindspace Business Parks REIT is developing a 330-key luxury hotel alongside a 5.3 lakh sq ft commercial tower at its Madhapur campus. The INR 350 crore project, to be managed by Chalet Hotels, reflects the growing trend of integrating hospitality with commercial real estate to boost asset value and create sustained demand. Bengaluru's Embassy TechVillage has incorporated a Hilton Garden Inn as part of its larger mixed-use ecosystem, while Mumbai's Three Sixty West combines luxury residences with the Four Seasons Hotel. At VR Bengaluru, The Waverly Hotel complements retail and lifestyle offerings, creating a destination that attracts visitors beyond shopping hours. Omaxe, meanwhile, has announced plans to invest INR 6,200 crore in developing 19 mixed-use hotels across religious destinations and transport corridors, signalling growing confidence in hospitality-led developments.

The strategy is rooted in changing consumer behaviour. People today are looking for places where they can work, meet, dine, unwind and stay within a single ecosystem rather than travelling between disconnected destinations. Developers and hotel operators say this shift is creating stronger footfalls, longer visitor engagement and more resilient revenue streams while making mixed-use developments commercially stronger in the long run.

Ingka Centres and SAMHI Skyline join hands for 162 rooms upscale hotel in Noida's mixed use project

Home to JW Marriott and Oakwood Premier Prestige, UB City is Bengaluru's iconic mixed use destination

Experience Economy

The rise of the experience economy has fundamentally changed how mixed-use projects are designed. Industry studies suggest that experiential retail and entertainment can increase visitor dwell time by as much as 40%, creating greater opportunities for spending across food, retail and leisure.

Mohit Goel, Managing Director, Omaxe Ltd., believes hospitality has expanded far beyond the traditional hotel model. "Experiential dining, entertainment zones and lifestyle-led formats increase average dwell time, improve repeat visits and create year-round engagement within a development. This directly strengthens retail performance, leasing demand and overall asset value," he said.

Developers are responding by creating destinations that remain active well beyond office hours or weekend shopping peaks. Sports arenas, curated food streets, wellness facilities and live entertainment are becoming integral parts of new developments rather than optional additions.

Amrita Gupta, Director, Manglam Group, says hospitality has become the activity generator that keeps mixed-use projects vibrant. "Hotels, restaurants, wellness centres and entertainment venues create reasons for people to visit beyond shopping or work. This increases footfalls, extends dwell time and supports stronger performance across retail, commercial and leisure components," she explained.

The emphasis has shifted from attracting one-time visitors

Mohit Goel
Managing Director,
Omaxe Ltd.

Amrita Gupta
Director,
Manglam Group

Gaurav Singh
Chief Operating Officer,
Chalet Hotels Limited

to creating places that become part of people's everyday lives.

Shared Ecosystems

One of the biggest strengths of mixed-use developments lies in the way different asset classes support one another.

Hotels benefit from a diverse customer base that includes office employees, residents, shoppers, event attendees and business travellers. Restaurants attract not only hotel guests but also the surrounding community, while retail outlets enjoy consistent foot traffic generated throughout the day. For developers, this creates a far more resilient business model than relying on a single asset class.

Marloes Knippenberg
Chief Executive Officer,
Kerten Hospitality

Manav Thadani
Managing Director,
Hotelivate Savills

Gaurav Singh, Chief Operating Officer, Chalet Hotels Limited, said integrated developments allow hospitality businesses to tap into multiple demand drivers simultaneously. "Hotels gain access to a ready consumer base comprising office occupiers, business travellers, residents, leisure guests and event attendees, while destination dining and F&B outlets enjoy consistent patronage beyond in-house guests," he added.

Chalet Hotels has built several projects around this philosophy. The company's JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar complements The Orb, its adjoining commercial office development, while Four Points by Sheraton Navi Mumbai benefits from its integration with Inorbit Mall. Likewise, The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake draws food and beverage demand not only from hotel guests but also from the surrounding office population, creating a steady business throughout the week.

Changing Expectations

The changing role of hospitality also reflects evolving consumer aspirations. People are no longer visiting hotels only to stay overnight. Hotels have become places where they meet colleagues, celebrate family occasions, dine with friends, attend events or simply spend time. This broader role is transforming mixed-use developments into social and cultural hubs rather than conventional commercial projects.

Developments such as The Omaxe State in Dwarka illustrate this shift by combining sports, entertainment and hospitality to create activity throughout the day.

Singh believes hospitality is increasingly becoming the element that gives a destination its identity. "Hotels today support much more than accommodation. They anchor business travel, destination dining, meetings and events, weddings, wellness experiences and community engagement. Together, these elements help create destinations that remain active throughout the day while attracting a diverse mix of consumers," he said.

The emphasis is now on creating experiences that encourage visitors to engage with the destination instead of simply passing through it.

The Omaxe State exemplifies Omaxe's vision of hospitality led mixed use development with an IHCL Gateway hotel

ITC's mixed use campus in Kolkata integrates hospitality, offices and knowledge spaces into a future ready business hub

Stronger Partnerships

As hospitality becomes central to mixed-use planning, collaboration between developers and hotel operators is also evolving.

Rather than bringing hospitality brands into a completed project, developers are involving them much earlier in the planning process. This allows hotels, restaurants, public spaces and entertainment venues to be designed as part of one integrated experience. Gupta said partnerships with established hotel brands create benefits for both sides. "Our collaborations with brands such as The Fern Hotels and Resorts and The Westin Jaipur Resort and Spa demonstrate how strong hospitality partners can enhance the overall appeal of a destination. This helps attract visitors, increase dwell time and create value across retail, dining and leisure offerings," she added.

Marloes Knippenberg, Chief Executive Officer, Kerten Hospitality, believes successful developments begin with a shared vision rather than a simple commercial arrangement. "It needs to begin with a shared vision for the destination, the community and the audience it is intended to serve. Every component, from hotels and residences to dining, wellness and cultural experiences, should work together to tell one coherent story," she said.

She believes hospitality brings an emotional dimension to developments that traditional real estate alone cannot create, making destinations more memorable and commercially sustainable over the long term.

Investment Case

The business case for hospitality-led developments is becoming increasingly compelling. Hotels contribute much more than room revenue. They generate income through restaurants, meetings, weddings, wellness services and events while simultaneously increasing the value of neighbouring retail and commercial assets. This diversification strengthens project economics and creates recurring revenue streams. Goel said, "Hospitality-led components improve both recurring revenues and long-term asset value. Hotels, F&B zones and entertainment infrastructure generate regular cash flows while also increasing the attractiveness of surrounding retail and commercial spaces, allowing developers to command better leasing terms and stronger capital values."

Investment advisors also see mixed-use developments emerging as the most influential business model for the hospitality sector. Manav Thadani, Managing Director, Hotelivate Savills, said, "Each of these models has merit, but if I had to identify the one with the most transformative potential, it is mixed-use development. When hospitality is integrated thoughtfully into a larger ecosystem with retail, residences, offices and wellness, it creates a consumer base that standalone hotels simply cannot replicate. It also improves asset economics and reduces dependence on any single revenue stream."

While branded residences continue to witness strong demand, particularly in the luxury segment, Thadani believes their success depends heavily on brand strength and execution. Asset light models, meanwhile, will continue to attract operators and investors looking for capital-efficient growth, while consolidation through mergers and acquisitions is expected to shape the competitive landscape.

Chalet Hotels has embraced a diversified approach by balancing hospitality with commercial real estate. The company currently operates 11 hotels with more than 3,389 keys while continuing to expand its commercial portfolio, creating resilient cash flows across market cycles.

Knippenberg describes hospitality as a multiplier for integrated developments. "For developers, hospitality creates a multiplier effect. It increases footfall, extends dwell time, enhances the attractiveness of retail and residential components, and ultimately contributes to stronger asset values and long-term monetisation opportunities," she said.

Future Outlook

As India's cities continue to expand, hospitality is set to play a defining role in the next generation of mixed-use developments.

Developers are increasingly competing not just on location or scale, but on the quality of experiences they can create. Hotels, destination dining, entertainment, wellness and cultural programming are becoming essential ingredients for projects that want to remain relevant in an increasingly experience-driven economy.

The next generation of successful developments will not simply be places where people shop, work or stay. They will be destinations where people choose to spend their time, build connections and create lasting memories. In that journey, hospitality is proving to be far more than an amenity. It is becoming the foundation on which India's future urban destinations are being built. ■

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As hospitality and real estate projects increasingly compete on experience rather than built form alone, landscape architecture has emerged as a strategic investment that shapes guest engagement, sustainability and long-term asset value. From luxury resorts and branded residences to mixed-use developments, developers are integrating outdoor environments into master planning to create differentiated destinations. In a conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee**, **Suraj Nayak, Founder and Managing Director of Ecoscapes Landscaping**, discusses the evolution of landscape design from an aesthetic add-on to a core business asset.

‘A well-designed landscape improves the marketability of a project’

Ecoscapes Landscaping has been expanding across hospitality, residential, and commercial segments. What is your current expansion strategy, and which markets or project types are you prioritising next?

At Ecoscapes, our growth strategy is focused on quality rather than volume. Over the past 18 years, we have built expertise in delivering integrated landscape solutions for luxury hospitality, premium residences, commercial developments and institutional projects. Going forward, our primary focus is on luxury hospitality, branded residences, wellness retreats, mixed-use developments and high-end villas.

We are also expanding our capabilities beyond landscaping to include water features, swimming pools, outdoor hardscapes, irrigation, lighting and long-term landscape maintenance. Our vision is to become India's most trusted integrated outdoor development company, delivering complete experiences rather than just green spaces.

How is the demand for landscape design evolving in the hospitality sector, especially with the rise of experiential and destination-led hotels?

The hospitality industry has undergone a significant transformation. Earlier, landscaping was viewed as beautification. Today, it is an integral part of the guest experience.

Guests increasingly choose destinations that offer immersive outdoor environments, wellness spaces, nature trails, water bodies and thoughtfully designed gardens. Landscape architecture now directly influences guest satisfaction, social media engagement and repeat visits.

Hotels are investing more in creating memorable outdoor experiences because they understand that a great landscape becomes part of the property's identity. The landscape is often the first impression and the last memory a guest takes home.

From an investment perspective, how do you position landscaping within overall project development budgets today? Do you see it increasingly being treated as a core asset rather than a finishing layer?

Absolutely. Progressive developers no longer see landscaping as the final cosmetic layer. They recognise it as a long-term investment that enhances asset value, guest experience and operational performance.

A well-designed landscape improves the marketability of a project, increases property value, enhances environmental performance and creates healthier spaces for users. It also contributes to sustainability by reducing heat, improving biodiversity and managing stormwater effectively.

We encourage clients to involve landscape consultants at the master planning stage because the earlier landscaping is integrated, the greater the long-term value it creates.

What is Ecoscapes' unique value proposition (USP) compared to traditional landscaping firms or design consultants working in hospitality projects?

Our biggest differentiator is that we provide end-to-end execution under one roof.

We combine landscape design coordination, engineering, swimming pools, water bodies, irrigation, hardscape construction, lighting, outdoor furniture integration and maintenance. This integrated approach ensures consistency in quality, timelines and accountability.

Having executed several luxury hospitality projects, we understand the operational standards expected by premium hotel brands. We don't simply create beautiful landscapes—we build outdoor environments that are functional, durable, sustainable and easy to maintain over the long term.

Could you walk us through your execution model? How do you integrate design, sustainability and on-ground delivery across large-scale hospitality and mixed-use developments?

Execution begins with understanding the client's vision, operational requirements and site conditions. We collaborate closely with architects, landscape consultants, structural engineers and MEP teams from the earliest stages.

Every project undergoes detailed planning, value engineering and material selection before execution begins. Sustainability is embedded into every stage through responsible water management, native and adaptive plant selection, efficient irrigation systems, recycled materials wherever feasible and climate-responsive planting strategies.

Strong project management, quality control and experienced execution teams allow us to deliver complex hospitality projects while maintaining international standards.

Projects like Taj Hampi highlight collaboration with global design talent. How important are international partnerships in shaping your design philosophy and scaling your portfolio?

International collaborations have played a significant role in expanding our design perspective. Working alongside globally recognised landscape architects has exposed our team to new ideas, construction methodologies and design philosophies.

Our work on projects such as Taj Hampi demonstrates how international expertise can be successfully combined with local knowledge, craftsmanship and climate-sensitive execution.

These collaborations help us continuously raise our standards while ensuring every project remains rooted in its regional identity rather than simply replicating international trends.

How do you see sustainability and climate-responsive design influencing investment decisions by hotel developers and real estate players in India?

Sustainability has shifted from being a desirable feature to becoming a business necessity. Developers today are looking beyond aesthetics. They are investing in landscapes that reduce water consumption, improve energy efficiency, support biodiversity and lower long-term maintenance costs.

Climate-responsive landscapes are proving to be economically beneficial because they reduce operational expenses while enhancing guest comfort and environmental resilience. As ESG goals become increasingly important, sustainable landscapes will continue to play a larger role in investment decisions.

What are the key revenue drivers for Ecoscapes today, and how do you plan to scale through large marquee projects, long-term maintenance contracts or integrated urban landscape solutions?

Our revenue today is driven primarily by turnkey landscape execution for hospitality, premium residential and commercial developments. We are also seeing significant growth in swimming pools, water features, specialised hardscapes and integrated outdoor infrastructure. Long-term landscape maintenance is becoming another important business vertical because clients increasingly prefer lifecycle management rather than one-time execution.

Looking ahead, our growth strategy focuses on delivering larger marquee hospitality developments, integrated township landscapes, luxury residential communities and sustainable urban public spaces. We believe the future lies in offering complete outdoor development solutions—from concept to execution and long-term maintenance—creating enduring value for both developers and end users.

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News Bulletin

TajGVK secures OC for 256-key Taj Yelahanka Hotel launch

HBI Staff | Hyderabad

Taj GVK Hotels & Resorts has secured the Occupancy Certificate (OC) from the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) for its upcoming 256-key Taj Yelahanka in North Bengaluru, clearing a key regulatory milestone ahead of the hotel's planned commercial launch in September 2026.

Spread across a three-acre site in the fast-growing Yelahanka micro-market, the luxury property is in the advanced stages of completion. The company is currently obtaining the remaining statutory licences and operational approvals required before opening.

Designed to cater to Bengaluru's expanding corporate travel, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) and leisure segments, the hotel is expected to strengthen premium hospitality supply along the city's northern growth corridor.

Commenting on the development, Krishna Bhupal, Joint Managing Director, Taj GVK Hotels & Resorts Ltd, said the receipt of the Occupancy Certificate marks a significant milestone, with the company now focused on securing ancillary approvals to meet its September operational timeline.

Beyond the initial development, Taj GVK also owns an adjoining four-acre land parcel earmarked for a potential Phase II expansion. The proposed extension is expected to further enhance the project's positioning as a landmark hospitality destination in the Yelahanka market.

The addition of the 256-room hotel will expand Taj GVK's premium portfolio, which includes properties across Hyderabad, Chennai, Chandigarh, Mumbai and other key Indian cities, while reinforcing confidence in North Bengaluru's emergence as a major hospitality and business destination. ■

India's F&B growth needs sustainability

India's F&B industry is expanding at a remarkable pace, driven by rapid restaurant launches, delivery-first brands, and evolving consumer demand. Yet behind this visible growth lies a tougher reality shaped by rising costs, operational strain, and the growing complexity of scaling food businesses sustainably. As competition intensifies, success is increasingly defined not by speed of expansion, but by operational discipline, consistency, and infrastructure strength. In a conversation with **Asmita Mukherjee, Bansi Kotecha, Co-founder at Kytchens** offers insights into the changing economics of the sector and the challenges brands face in building scalable models.

With India witnessing a sharp rise in restaurant launches and delivery-first brands, do you believe the market is becoming overcrowded? What are the biggest challenges new F&B businesses face while trying to scale sustainably?

India's F&B market is becoming more competitive, but the challenge is not overcrowding, it is sustainability. Although entry barriers are lower, scaling is still complicated by decentralised supply chains, segregated infrastructures and the absence of process standardisation. Many early-stage brands underappreciate the operational rigour necessary for multi-unit expansion. Hence, the failure rates are higher after gaining initial traction. Brands that only play on positioning, or novelty factor, are now less rewarded than those that develop maturity in their operations before they fly high.

The hospitality and restaurant industry continues to battle rising rentals, manpower shortages, and fluctuating food costs. How are cloud kitchen models helping brands navigate these operational pressures more effectively?

Cloud kitchen models help brands navigate cost pressures by reducing dependence on high-rent dine-in spaces and enabling more flexible location strategies. Standardised kitchen environments improve manpower efficiency and reduce redundancy. They also enable better inventory management, portion control, and procurement efficiencies. By shifting from fixed-heavy to efficiency-driven operations, these models allow brands to operate with tighter cost control while maintaining consistency, which is critical in a margin-sensitive and highly competitive industry.

Consumer preferences in India are evolving rapidly, especially with the growth of convenience-led dining and food delivery platforms. How do you see customer behaviour reshaping the future of the restaurant business?

Consumer behaviour is increasingly driven by convenience, reliability, and speed. With the rise of delivery platforms, customers expect consistent quality across every order. Ratings and reviews have amplified accountability, making reliability more important than novelty. Consumers now prioritise predictability in taste, portion, and experience. This shift is pushing brands to strengthen backend operations and invest in systems that ensure uniform outcomes, as long-term loyalty is built on consistency rather than one-time experiences.

Many restaurant brands struggle to expand beyond a single successful outlet. From your experience at Kytchens, what are the biggest barriers to multi-city or multi-brand expansion in India today?

The biggest barrier to expansion is the inability to maintain operational consistency across locations. Each new city introduces supply chain, workforce, and infrastructure challenges. Without standardised processes and backend readiness, brands struggle to replicate quality. Many expand based on demand without building operational capacity, leading to dilution. Scalable growth requires strong process frameworks and standardised infrastructure that reduce variability and allow brands to deliver a consistent experience across geographies.

Supply chain disruptions and LPG shortages have affected food businesses across the country. How important is operational resilience and alternative infrastructure, such as electric kitchens, in ensuring long-term business continuity?

Operational resilience is critical for long-term continuity. Disruptions such as LPG shortages highlight the risks of traditional dependencies. Alternative infrastructure like electric kitchens improves reliability and reduces exposure to fuel volatility while enabling more controlled operations. Beyond this, resilience comes from diversified supply chains, demand forecasting, and inventory planning. Brands that invest in such systems can better absorb disruptions without compromising consistency, which is essential for maintaining customer trust.

As competition intensifies across dine-in, QSR, and delivery-led formats, what differentiates successful food brands from those that fail to sustain momentum in the current Indian hospitality landscape?

Operational consistency is the key differentiator in today's competitive landscape. While innovation attracts customers, reliability retains them. Successful brands deliver consistent quality across all formats and touchpoints. This requires standardised processes, strong infrastructure, and continuous performance monitoring. The ability to adapt to changing trends while maintaining control over operations is equally important. Brands that treat operations as a strategic function, rather than a backend activity, are the ones that sustain momentum. ■

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From halwai to hospitality: The transformation of india's catering industry

By **Sanjeev Kumar,** a veteran of India's catering industry and author of Stalwart of Catering Industry

Ask anyone about an old family wedding and chances are, they'll first talk about the food.

Not the décor. Not the lighting. Not even the venue.

They'll remember the hot jalebis being fried live at midnight, the aroma of desi ghee floating through the lawn, or the halwai everyone insisted on hiring for every family function because "unke haath ka taste alag hai."

That was the real beginning of India's catering industry.

Long before hospitality became a corporate word, Indian celebrations were run by halwais who built their reputation purely on trust and taste. Most of them had never attended culinary schools. Their recipes were not documented anywhere. Everything came from instinct, years of practice, and family tradition.

And honestly, many of them understood hospitality better than modern systems do.

For them, feeding guests was emotional. If people left the wedding happy and overfed, the event was successful.

Today, the industry looks completely different.

Over the last two decades, catering in India has transformed from a traditional food service business into a full-scale hospitality experience. Weddings have become larger, more curated, and far more detail-oriented than before. Food is no longer just part of the function. In many weddings, it becomes the main conversation.

Families now discuss menus months in advance. Guests expect interactive experiences, global cuisines, live counters, artisanal desserts, healthier options, and presentation that looks elegant both in person and on social media.

Sometimes I feel today's food is served twice — once to the guests, and once to their Instagram.

But that shift has also pushed the industry to evolve in positive ways.

Indian caterers today are managing operations at an incredible scale. What once depended on handwritten notebooks and landline coordination is now driven by production planning, technology, logistics systems, guest analytics, and highly trained service teams.

The modern caterer is no longer just cooking food. He is managing hospitality.

At the same time, something interesting is happening. After years of chasing international trends, people are slowly returning to Indian roots.

There was a period when every luxury wedding wanted imported concepts because they looked aspirational. But today, guests get equally excited about regional Indian cuisines. A beautifully prepared Kashmiri wazwan, authentic Rajasthani food, temple cuisine, millet-based recipes, or even a simple traditional breakfast served properly creates a stronger memory than many imported dishes.

And personally, I think that's a good sign.

India's culinary identity is incredibly rich. Every few hundred kilometres, flavours change completely. Earlier we underestimated our own diversity. Now there is pride attached to showcasing it.

This change is also helping local communities in ways many people don't notice immediately.

A large Indian wedding supports hundreds of livelihoods behind the scenes — farmers, florists, potters, transport workers, artisans, servers, fabric suppliers, decorators, local vendors, and small craftsmen. Hospitality has always created employment, but today there is growing awareness around making that ecosystem more local and more conscious.

Clients now ask where ingredients come from. They want locally sourced produce. They want handmade elements, sustainable serviceware, regional ingredients, and less wastage. Even simple things like using clay pots, cane baskets, or Indian-made serving equipment are becoming part of larger conversations around sustainability and supporting local economies.

These conversations simply did not happen earlier.

I believe the "Vocal for Local" movement has played an important role here. It has encouraged both businesses and consumers to look inward again and value Indian craftsmanship beyond tokenism.

And honestly, Indian hospitality has never lacked warmth. What it lacked sometimes was confidence in its own identity.

That confidence is coming back.

Of course, the pressure on the industry today is also much higher than before. Guests are more aware, expectations are bigger, and social media leaves very little room for mistakes. One small issue can become public instantly. But in many ways, that pressure has also improved standards across the industry.

Yet despite all the modernisation, I still feel the core philosophy of Indian catering remains unchanged.

People may appreciate luxury, but what they truly remember is warmth.

They remember whether they were looked after properly. Whether someone insisted they eat more. Whether the hospitality felt genuine.

And that lesson comes directly from the old halwai culture.

The attire may have changed from kurta-clad cooks standing beside giant kadhais to professionally managed hospitality teams in uniforms, but the intention remains the same — making people feel welcomed through food.

That, in my opinion, is what makes Indian hospitality timeless.

The industry may have evolved from halwai to hospitality, but its heart is still beautifully Indian. ■

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

'We aim to become the best Chinese cuisine brand in India'

As organised Chinese dining gains momentum across India, Kolkata-based Chowman is entering a new phase of growth under the leadership of **Debaditya Choudhury**. The restaurant chain is pursuing a company-owned expansion strategy focused on new metro and Tier-II markets while investing in operational excellence to support its Mission 2030 vision of emerging as the country's leading Chinese restaurant brand.

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

With more than 50 outlets across Chowman and its sister brands spanning West Bengal, Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai, the company is now looking to deepen its national footprint.

"Our next mission is to anchor into other metro cities like Pune and Lucknow while permeating through Tier-II markets such as Chandigarh, Bhubaneswar, Nagpur and several others. We are working towards our Mission 2030 with the motto of becoming the best Chinese brand across India," says Debaditya Chaudhury, Founder & MD, Chowman.

Unlike many restaurant brands that have adopted an asset-light franchise route, Chowman intends to retain greater operational control through company-owned restaurants, he added.

Scaling with consistency

For Chowman, expansion has been as much about creating robust systems as opening new restaurants. Ensuring consistency across markets has emerged as one of the biggest operational priorities.

"Expansion is exciting on paper, but operationally it is one of the toughest phases for any restaurant brand. A customer walking into a Chowman outlet in Kolkata should experience the same taste, quality and hospitality as someone dining in Bengaluru or Mumbai," Choudhury explains. Building dependable supply chains for specialised Chinese ingredients has also required considerable investment in vendor development, quality assurance and logistics.

"Authentic Chinese cuisine depends on specialised ingredients, many of which are not readily available across every city. Building a reliable vendor network, maintaining quality checks and ensuring timely deliveries required significant planning and constant monitoring," he says.

Talent has been another critical pillar of the company's expansion strategy. Standardised kitchen processes, detailed SOPs, continuous chef training and technology-enabled inventory management have helped the brand replicate its operating model across geographies.

"Expansion taught us that growth is not merely about opening more restaurants—it's about building systems that can consistently deliver the same experience every single day, irrespective of the location," he adds.

Managing inflation through efficiency

Like most foodservice operators, Chowman continues to face pressure from rising LPG prices, raw material inflation and increasing labour costs. However, instead of passing on the entire burden to consumers through higher menu prices, the company has focused on improving operational efficiencies.

"We regularly conduct cross-functional meetings involving our operations, procurement, finance and culinary teams to review costs, identify inefficiencies and explore opportunities for optimisation," says Choudhury.

Technology has become an important lever in this process. "From inventory and stock management systems to demand forecasting, sales analytics and real-time operational monitoring, we've embraced technology to improve efficiency across the business. Better data allows us to minimise food wastage, optimise manpower deployment and make informed purchasing decisions," he notes.

According to Choudhury, the focus has been on strengthening organisational efficiency rather than relying solely on price revisions.

"This approach has enabled us to protect profitability while continuing to deliver the quality and value that customers associate with the Chowman brand."

Betting on experience as a differentiator

With the Chinese and Pan-Asian dining space witnessing growing competition from regional and national brands, Chowman is positioning itself as an experience-led hospitality brand rather than merely a restaurant chain.

"I wanted Chowman to be more inclusive and more of an experience than a mere food joint," says Choudhury.

To reinforce authenticity, the company imports select sauces, crockery and cutlery from different parts of Asia while creating restaurant interiors and ambience inspired by traditional Chinese culture. It was also among the early restaurant brands in Kolkata to adopt the cloud kitchen model and extended the same philosophy to home delivery by introducing chopsticks with every order. "I wanted to present not just Chinese food but introduce the entire art of eating into every household," he says.

Quality assurance remains central to the brand's operating philosophy. Imported ingredients are supplemented by BIS-compliant procurement processes, periodic laboratory testing of cooked and raw food, drinking water and high-risk food categories, alongside dedicated Food Safety Supervisors responsible for hygiene and compliance.

The company also conducts weekly secret food audits, continuous chef training and service audits, supported by a 20-member customer feedback team that monitors guest experiences and resolves complaints in real time, he informed. "These are some of the practices that have kept us leagues ahead," Choudhury says.

Dine-in remains central despite delivery boom

While delivery continues to account for a growing share of restaurant revenues across the industry, Chowman believes physical dining will remain a key growth engine."No matter the surging delivery convenience, dine-in is a very important aspect of the F&B business. Our customers seek not only good food but an overall restaurant experience where service and ambience play an equally important role," Choudhury says.

He attributes the brand's sustained footfalls to what he describes as "a five-star experience at a one-star price," backed by an extensive menu, imported and chef-crafted sauces, in-house processed noodles and accessible pricing.

As the company embarks on its next phase of expansion, Chowman is betting that disciplined company-owned growth, technology-driven operations and a differentiated guest experience will help it strengthen its position in India's increasingly competitive organised Chinese dining market.

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CHOWMAN

A taste that travels

For anyone familiar with India's love for Indo Chinese food, the story often begins in Kolkata. The city's historic Territi Bazar, Chinatown and its Chinese-descendant communities played a defining role in shaping the flavours that generations of Indians have grown up enjoying. ChowmanIt is from these roots that Chowman, founded by Debaditya Chaudhury, emerged and went on to become one of the country's most loved destinations for Kolkata-style Chinese cuisine. With its newest outlet in Hyderabad's Champapet, the brand brings another slice of that legacy to the city.

The restaurant makes a pleasant first impression. Warm lighting, comfortable seating and subtle red and black oriental elements create a space that feels inviting. There is a relaxed charm to the outlet that makes it equally suited for a family dinner, a casual catch up with friends or even a quick meal after work.

The meal began with Chowman's Favourite Soup, a signature preparation that lives up to its name. The broth combines two different soups into one flavourful blend, creating layers of taste in every spoonful. With pak choi, chicken, mushrooms and delicate egg drops adding texture and depth, the soup felt comforting and nourishing, setting the tone for what followed.

The Steamed Chicken Momos were among the highlights of the meal. Soft, juicy and neatly wrapped, they were enjoyable on their own, but the spicy house dip elevated the experience with an extra burst of flavour.

The Chicken Karaage arrived golden and crisp, with a crunchy exterior giving way to tender, succulent chicken inside. Paired with the chef's special mayo and a squeeze of lemon, it made for an addictive appetiser.

The Asian Chilli Garlic Prawn easily stole the spotlight. Coated in a glossy chilli garlic and sriracha glaze, the prawns delivered a delicious balance of sweetness, heat and smokiness. It was one of those dishes that kept drawing diners back for another bite. The Asian Chilli Garlic Prawn and Chicken Karaage were part of Chowman's Great Asian Food Festival, a specially curated menu featuring signature dishes inspired by the culinary traditions of Korea, Thailand, provincial China, Japan, Vietnam and Malaysia.

The Honey Chilli Lotus Stem brought a welcome crunch to the table, while the Chicken Basil Fried Rice showcased the smoky wok-tossed flavours that have become synonymous with good Indo Chinese food.

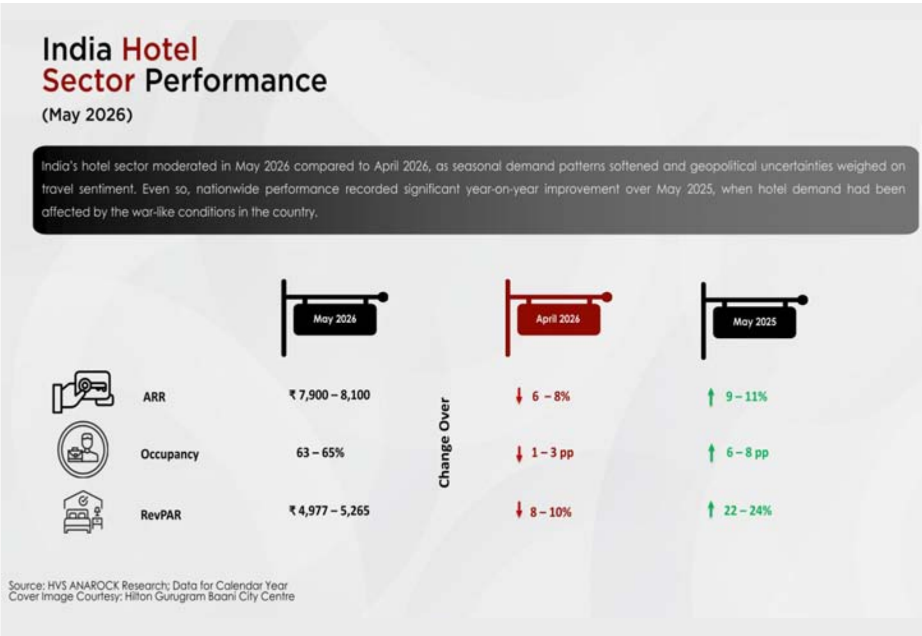
Another standout was the Pan Fried Chilli Fish. Crispy on the outside and tender within, the fish was tossed in a sweet chilli sauce that balanced tanginess, sweetness and gentle heat beautifully. The smoky finish made it a natural companion to the fried rice.

The Butter Garlic Fish offered a softer, more comforting flavour profile. The flaky fish, coated in a rich garlic butter sauce, was simple yet satisfying and provided a nice contrast to some of the bolder dishes on the menu.

To round off the meal, the Cucumber Limeade proved refreshing and light, while the Sparkling Blueberry added a fun, fizzy touch.

What has helped Chowman become a favourite across multiple cities is its understanding of what diners truly seek from Indo Chinese cuisine. The new Champapet outlet continues that tradition, giving Hyderabad diners another dependable address for flavours that feel both nostalgic and satisfying. ■

India's hotel sector sustains growth despite seasonal softening: HVS ANAROCK

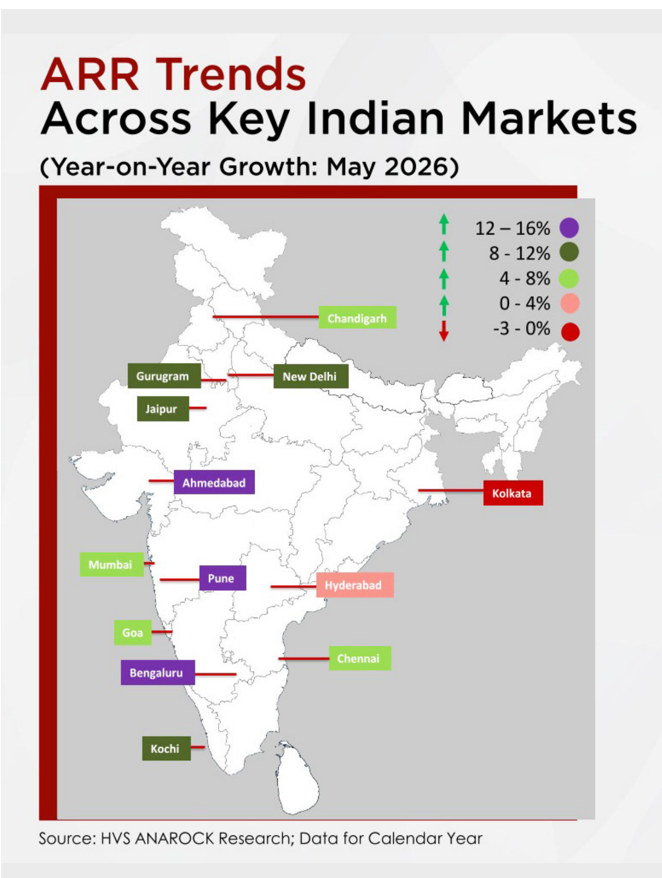


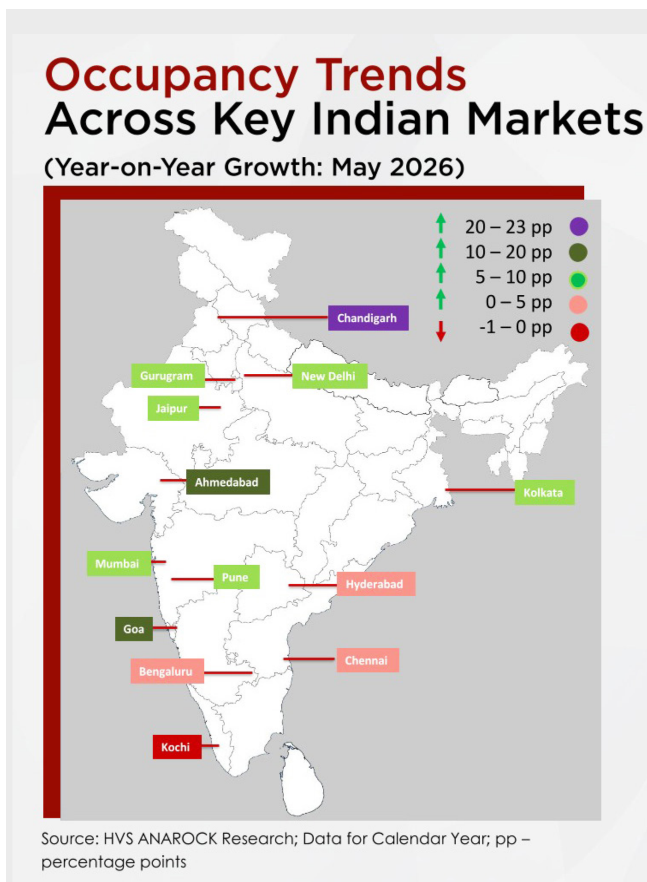
HBI Staff | Hyderabad

India's hotel industry maintained healthy year-on-year growth in May 2026 despite seasonal demand moderation and geopolitical uncertainties, according to the latest HVS ANAROCK Monitor. The report said the sector continued to benefit from resilient domestic travel, corporate movement and MICE demand, even as performance softened sequentially from April.

National Average Room Rates (ARR) stood at INR 7,900–8,100, registering a 6–8% year-on-year increase, while occupancy improved by 1–3 percentage points to 63–65%. Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) rose 8–10% to ₹4,977–5,265, reflecting sustained pricing power across the industry.

Among key markets, Bengaluru recorded the strongest ARR growth at 15–17% year-on-year, driven by robust corporate and commercial demand, followed by Pune with 11–13% growth. In contrast, Mumbai witnessed a 5–7% decline in ARR, while Ahmedabad and Jaipur also reported marginal declines. Despite these variations, all major



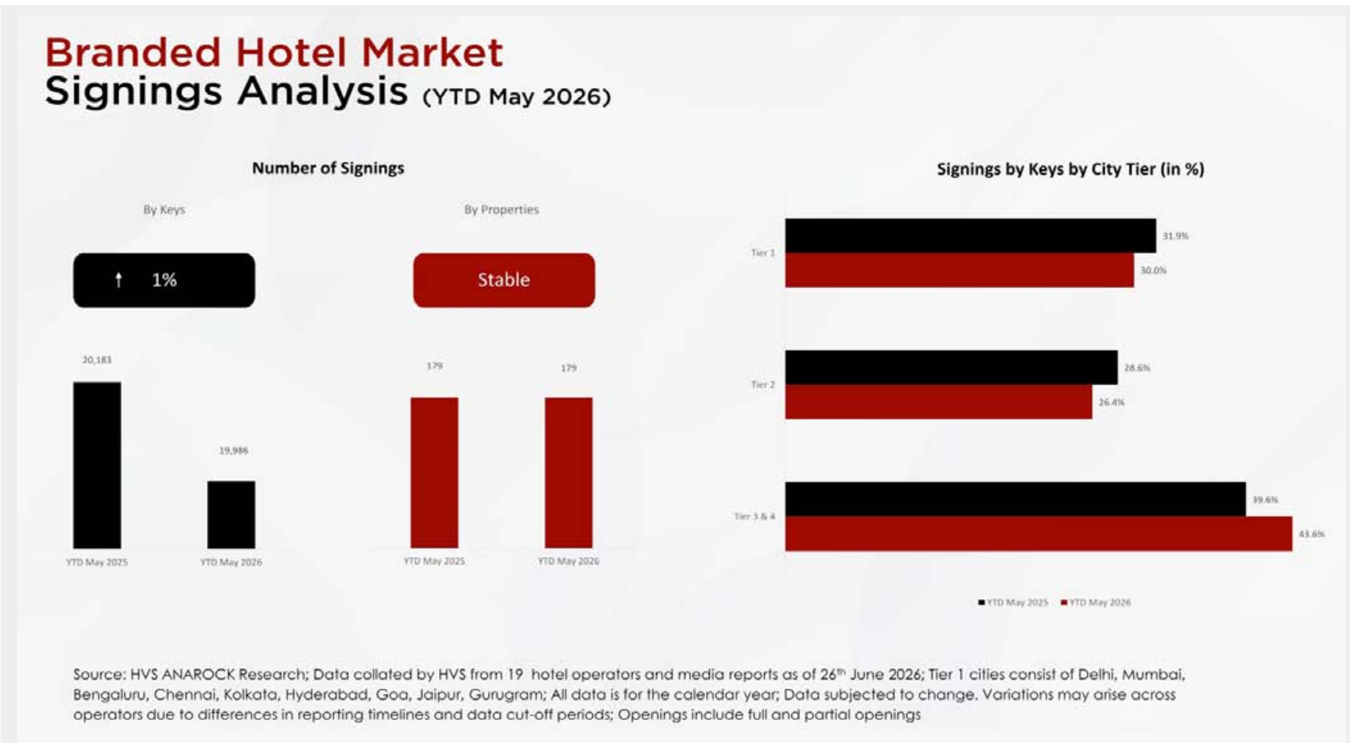


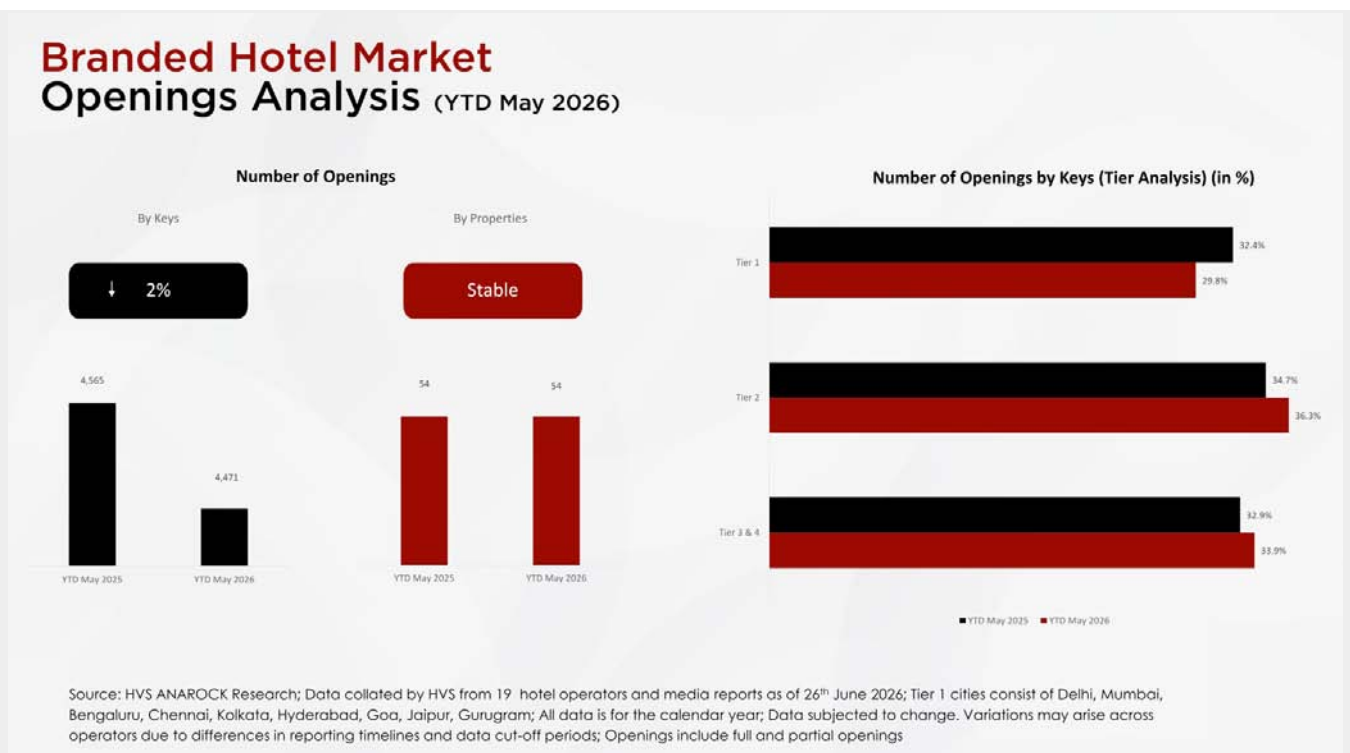
markets except Kolkata posted year-on-year growth in room rates.

Occupancy trends remained stable nationwide. Chandigarh emerged as the best-performing market, registering the highest occupancy growth of 2–4 percentage points year-on-year. Goa and Ahmedabad also recorded notable improvements, while Gurugram, Jaipur and Mumbai reported occupancy declines of 3–5 percentage points. Compared to May 2025, when demand was affected by geopolitical disruptions, almost all key markets reported occupancy gains, with Chandigarh leading at 22–24 percentage points.

On the supply side, branded hotel development remained steady. During January–May 2026, the industry recorded 179 hotel signings, virtually unchanged from the previous year, although total signed inventory increased marginally to 20,183 keys from 19,986 keys. Tier II and Tier III cities accounted for nearly 60% of new signings, underlining continued expansion into emerging markets.

Hotel openings also remained stable, with 54 branded hotels comprising 4,471 keys becoming operational during the first five months of 2026. The report indicates that India's hospitality sector continues to demonstrate resilience, supported by diversified demand drivers. ■





Darshan Ramchandani, Niharika Gollapalli, and Chef Suryansh Singh, founders of See and TheySee

See
Behind the Red Door

Asmita Mukherjee | Hyderabad

Hidden Haven

Every city has that one place everyone talks about but very few have actually been to. In Hyderabad, that place is See.

At a time when restaurants are busy chasing Instagram reels, influencer collaborations and online reservations, See has quietly chosen the opposite route. Hidden inside TheySee in Jubilee Hills, this intimate 22 seater cocktail bar has no public reservations, no walk ins and no visible social media presence. You get in because someone who has already experienced it believes you should too.

The mystery begins with a bright red door, open it and the city disappears.

Bathed in crimson light and set against an infectious Afro Indian soundtrack, the space feels alive. A towering red Nazar Battu keeps a watchful eye on the room, its piercing red laser eyes impossible to ignore, mechanical flipbooks invite curiosity, handcrafted ceramics add warmth and the retro television installation lends just the right touch of vintage nostalgia. Sitting there almost feels like watching a DJ's live performance where every beat, every light and every object is perfectly in sync.

The idea comes from founders Niharika Gollapalli, Chef Suryansh Singh and Darshan Ramchandani, the team behind TheySee, while the cocktail programme has been created by Pradyumna Shanker. Through Lyzure, Niharika's art incubation platform, local artists have shaped the space into something that feels more like an installation than a restaurant. Even the LED badges carrying guests' names make one feel less like a customer and more like someone who has accidentally found their way into a private club.

Live DJ performance

Liquid Theatre

The surprise is that once you get over the interiors, the food refuses to play second fiddle. Chef Suryansh Singh understands exactly what good bar food should do. It should comfort you, satisfy you and make you want another drink. But make no mistake. The cocktails are the real stars of the See. Every drink comes with its own personality and its own story. They lean heavily into Indian flavours without making them feel forced or theatrical.

Laura's Lassan is easily the showstopper. Reposado tequila and mezcal meet cacao bitters and black garlic pickle, creating a cocktail that sounds unconventional but drinks with surprising elegance. Smoky, savoury and slightly mysterious, it is the sort of drink that makes everyone at the table ask for a sip before quietly ordering one for themselves. Whiskey Saar takes the familiar whisky sour and gives it a tropical detour with mango, passionfruit, honey and fresh citrus. It is bright, balanced and dangerously easy to finish.

Then comes First Nightu, perhaps the most playful cocktail on the menu. Built with vodka, jasmine soda, lacto fermented jasmine honey and citrus liqueur, it is floral without becoming perfumed and delicate without losing character. There is enough experimentation to keep cocktail enthusiasts engaged, yet enough familiarity for first time drinkers to feel comfortable.

Bar Bites

The food understands its supporting role perfectly. The Cheej Keema Pao delivers rich lamb keema tucked into buttery maska pao with gratinated chilli cheese. It is indulgent in the best possible way. Fried Chix, coated with neyyi karam podi and paired with garlic aioli, disappears almost as quickly as it arrives. Chepala Chips offers crisp bites layered with masala fish mousse, making it one of those plates that keeps returning to the table even after everyone insists they are full.

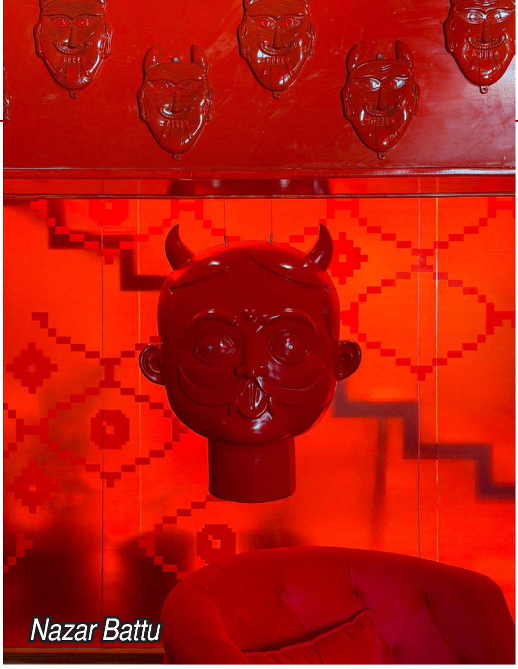
In main course, Golden Pallav is comfort food dressed for a night out. Crispy saffron rice socarrat, chicken prepared two ways, kasundi mayo, cured yolk and a flavourful rassa come together in a dish that is rich, textural and surprisingly refined.

Dessert keeps things simple and comforting. Taguboth Tiramisu, infused with filter coffee, ends the meal on a familiar note.

Community First

For co founder Niharika Gollapalli, the idea behind See goes beyond creating an exclusive address. “If I can answer this question in one word, I would say mental stimulation. If one is mentally stimulated, the attention span is higher. I am not a huge fan of surrendering to trends although today’s world requires a little of both in terms of design and conceptualisation.”

She says the referral model was never about making people feel excluded. “Exclusivity isn’t about keeping people out. It’s about making every guest feel like they belong. With only 22 seats, we’d rather build a community than chase footfall. Referrals create trust before a guest even walks in because every person is introduced by someone who already understands the experience. From a business perspective, it’s about prioritising customer quality over customer quantity.”


Nazar Battu


Laura’s Lassan

That philosophy also shapes the business strategy. “A referred guest is more likely to value the experience, return and become an advocate for the brand. Every member receives a limited number of referrals, allowing the community to grow organically while demand consistently stays ahead of supply. It’s much harder to recreate exclusivity once you’ve lost it.”

Speaking about pricing, she adds,”We benchmarked against premium cocktail bars in India while delivering significantly more in terms of originality and immersion. Premium pricing gives us the freedom to source better ingredients, experiment creatively and deliver hospitality that’s difficult to achieve at scale. We’d rather serve fewer people exceptionally well than more people with a compromised experience.”

Kitchen Philosophy

Chef Suryansh Singh Kanwar believes that bar food should always know its role. “Bar food needs to be indulgent and easy to eat. Most importantly, it should complement the drinks and match the energy and vibe of the space rather than compete with it.”

He says consistency is built through discipline rather than luck. “We are not trying to be a QSR, so we have the freedom to focus on the details. Every recipe is documented, every ingredient is measured and every process is followed consistently. At the end of the day, it’s the team that makes the biggest difference.”

For Singh, everything begins with the basics.

“Good food and great drinks will always be the main attraction. Everything else, whether it’s the music, design or ambience, should simply enhance that experience. We want people to remember the entire evening, but it all starts with what’s on the table and in the glass.”

Fake Birthday

Service Matters

For Darshan Ramchandani, hospitality is built on recognising people rather than simply serving them. “Working in high volume hospitality taught me the importance of consistency, structure and communication during service. In a small room like See, every detail is noticed, so the experience cannot depend only on instinct or individual personality.”He believes the smallest gestures are often the most memorable.”Food and ambience may bring guests in, but repeat business is built through recognition and consistency. Guests remember when a restaurant understands their preferences, the purpose of their visit and the way they like to be hosted.”

He says, that personal touch is only possible because of the systems running quietly in the background. “A personalised experience has to be repeatable. Otherwise it becomes dependent on one person or one good night of service. The goal is to keep the experience personal while making it operationally consistent and commercially sustainable.”

Final Pour

See is not simply selling cocktails or bar food, rather it is selling curiosity. The referral gets you through the red door, but it is the warmth of the team, the art , the curiosity that keeps revealing itself. The thoughtfully crafted cocktails and the comforting food that make you want to earn another invitation. In a city overflowing with places to be seen, See has managed to create something far rarer. A place worth discovering, and perhaps, worth keeping secret. ■

Mechanical Flipbooks

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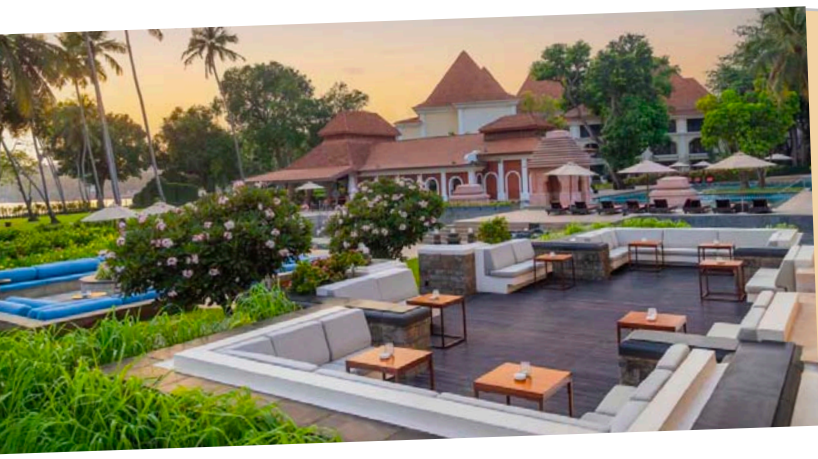
HRAWI hosts FSSAI's FoSTaC programme in Ahmedabad

The Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India) HRAWI organized FSSAI's latest Food Safety Supervisor Training in Advance Catering (FoSTaC) at The Grand Bhagwati in Ahmedabad, Gujarat on 8th July, 2026. Twenty-one hospitality professionals from the region participated in the training program conducted by Praveen Andrews. It covered essential topics including food handling, hygiene, sanitation and waste management and imparted practical insights on strengthening food safety measures and reinforcing industry best practices.

HRAWI has successfully trained and certified 3,891 hospitality professionals through its FoSTaC and FSSAI's Management Training Program. The programme is designed to promote a culture of food safety and equipping industry professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to uphold the highest standards in daily operations.



Hyatt Hotels in Goa launch 'Goa You 2026' with seasonal 'Hyatt Hideaways' offer

Hyatt Hotels in Goa have launched GOA YOU 2026, the fourth edition of their joint destination campaign, introducing the seasonal "Hyatt Hideaways" experience. Running through September 30, the offer spans Grand Hyatt Goa, Alila Diwa Goa, Hyatt Centric Goa, Ronil Goa – a JdV by Hyatt Hotel, and Hyatt Place Goa. Guests booking a minimum two-night stay receive daily breakfast, welcome beer, select beverages and INR 1,000 nightly hotel credit, targeting summer and monsoon travel beyond Goa's peak season.

Dnyaan Prasad Global University School for Hospitality and Tourism joins hands with Singapore's Nanyang Institute of Management to build bridges across borders

Dnyaan Prasad Global University School for Hospitality and Tourism, by Dr. D. Y. Patil Unitech Society, Pune, under the leadership of Dr. Pradyuman Rathore, Director, DPGU School for Hospitality and Tourism, has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Singapore's Nanyang Institute of Management (NIM), represented by Khoo Raymond, Vice President (SRA), Nanyang Institute of Management, Ms. Tanny, Student Recruitment & Admissions, Deputy Director and Harsh Pagaria, Assistant Country Manager - India (Sales & Marketing). The partnership sets the stage for a deeper academic collaboration between the two institutions, laying the groundwork for cross-border learning, shared research, and closer ties between faculty and students on both sides. Under the terms of the MoU, the two schools will work together on student and faculty exchange programmes, collaborative research projects, and the exchange of academic resources and teaching practices. The goal is straightforward: give students a wider lens on the hospitality and tourism industry by connecting them with a different education system, a different culture, and a different way of thinking about the field.

Deepika Padukone and Hilton launch new chapter of global 'It Matters Where You Stay' campaign

Hilton has launched the latest phase of its global "It Matters Where You Stay" campaign featuring actor and brand ambassador Deepika Padukone, following the campaign's 2025 debut, which the company said generated more than 11 billion views across social and digital platforms. Shot at Conrad Bengaluru, the new campaign will run across social, digital and outdoor platforms, with additional content scheduled through the year. It focuses on Hilton's proposition that hotel stays play a critical role in providing comfort, convenience and support to travellers away from their regular routines. The campaign features content spanning dining, wellness, loyalty benefits and service by Hilton team members, while presenting a more spontaneous and expressive side of Padukone. Music and movement are central to the campaign, which was created with GRAMMY Award-winning director Nadia Marquard Otzen, choreographer Shay Latukolan and music producer Mikey McCleary.

Fortune Lakeview Bhimtalby ITC, Uttarakhand

ITC Hotels Limited (ITCHL) has expanded its footprint in Uttarakhand with the opening of the 63-key Fortune Lakeview Bhimtal, taking its portfolio in the state to 12 operational properties as it strengthens its presence across India's high-growth leisure destinations.

The hotel features banquet and conference facilities for up to 200 guests alongside a dedicated boardroom, targeting the growing demand for corporate retreats, leadership meetings and intimate social events. Recreational amenities include an all-weather swimming pool, fitness centre and a spa scheduled to open soon.

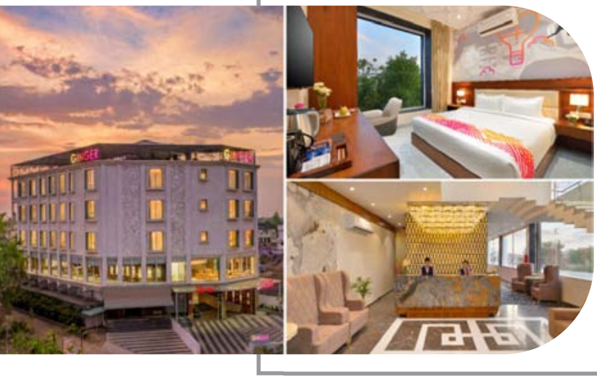
Food and beverage offerings comprise Zodiac, the all-day dining restaurant serving Kumaoni and international cuisine, Neptune Bar, and the upcoming rooftop restaurant Nakshatra, which will offer open-air dining overlooking the lake.

Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Tech Village

Embassy Office Parks REIT and Hilton have opened the 211-key Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy TechVillage, strengthening hospitality infrastructure within Bengaluru's Outer Ring Road business corridor and marking the first phase of a 529-key dual-branded hotel development.

Located within Embassy TechVillage, one of the city's largest integrated business parks, the hotel is Hilton's fourth property with Embassy REIT and will be followed later this year by a full-service Hilton Hotels & Resorts property, completing the dual-branded complex.

The development enhances Embassy TechVillage's mixed-use ecosystem, which accommodates more than 100,000 users across technology, financial services, consulting and global capability centres. The hotel also benefits from direct access to the upcoming Kadubeesanahalli Metro Station, improving connectivity for corporate travellers and business visitors.



Ginger Gadchiroli

The newly opened Ginger Gadchiroli, Mul Road features 34 rooms and is strategically positioned near key commercial centres, government offices and transport links, catering to both business and leisure travellers.

The hotel offers contemporary accommodation, community-focused spaces, and the brand's signature all-day dining outlet, Qmin, serving Indian and international cuisine. Additional facilities include a bar and a flexible event venue designed for meetings, corporate gatherings and social functions.

Goldfinch Panjim Goa Hotel

MRG Group has expanded its hospitality portfoliowith the launch of Goldfinch Panjim Goa, a 98-key hotel overlooking the Mandovi River in the heart of Goa's capital city.

Designed to cater to both business and leisure travellers, Goldfinch Panjim Goa offers 98 guestrooms, including seven suites, featuring contemporary interiors, modern amenities and functional design. The hotel also provides convenient access to Panjim's commercial centres, cultural attractions and entertainment districts.

The property's food and beverage offering is anchored by Banjara, an all-day dining restaurant serving a mix of international cuisine and Goan specialities aimed at both resident guests and local patrons.

Samsung unveils AI VRF WindFree Smart Cooling for homes AI

Samsung has announced a major push into next-generation residential climate control with the deployment of its integrated Smart Air Care ecosystem in Hyderabad, marking a significant escalation in AI-driven HVAC innovation for premium housing projects in India. The rollout combines WindFree cooling, PM1.0-grade air purification, SmartThings-enabled connectivity, and AI-powered VRF infrastructure to deliver a unified system focused on comfort, efficiency, and indoor air quality. The deployment is backed by a large-scale 4,864 HP AI-enabled VRF framework designed to optimize performance across high-density residential environments. At the core of the system is Samsung's WindFree technology, which eliminates direct cold airflow by dispersing air through thousands of micro-holes, maintaining stable thermal comfort without harsh drafts. Complementing this is an advanced PM1.0 filtration module capable of capturing ultrafine particulate matter and supporting healthier indoor environments amid rising urban pollution levels.

Tipsy Tabby introduces Fruit Wine Seltzers

Tipsy Tabby has launched its range of fruit wine seltzers, introducing a refreshing new category to the country's evolving alcohol landscape. Made with real fruit, containing just 40 calories per bottle, and crafted with 5% ABV, the brand offers a lighter alternative that combines flavour, quality, and conscious indulgence.

Currently available in Guava, Lime, and Pineapple variants, Tipsy Tabby delivers a refreshing, fruit-forward drinking experience while introducing consumers to an entirely new way of enjoying alcohol. The brand is currently available at select retail stores across Mumbai.

My Barrel & Beyond strengthens premium spirits Portfolio with the debut of Emberstone Irish Whiskey

My Barrel & Beyond has announced the launch of Emberstone Irish Whiskey in India, introducing a premium Irish whiskey that celebrates craftsmanship, patience, and enduring character. Crafted in Ireland using time-honoured distilling methods, Emberstone enters one of the world's fastest-growing premium spirits markets.

The whiskey opens with inviting aromas of toasted oak, delicate dried fruits, hints of vanilla, and subtle spice. On the palate, it reveals honeyed malt, baked orchard fruits, gentle nutty undertones, and soft tannins shaped by its Oloroso Sherry and Banyuls wine cask finish. The experience concludes with a long, elegant finish featuring lingering oak, warming spice, and a gentle ember of warmth that lingers well beyond the final sip, reflecting the brand's commitment to craftsmanship and balance.

Following its launch in Delhi, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, Emberstone will expand into Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, and Karnataka later this year as part of a phased rollout strategy.

Nisaki Gin expands distribution to Meghalaya, Rajasthan

Homegrown spirits brand Nisaki Indian Dry Gin has expanded its distribution footprint to Meghalaya and Rajasthan, strengthening its presence in India's premium alcoholic beverage market and reinforcing ongoing growth in the domestic craft spirits segment. The rollout begins in Meghalaya from 26 June, followed by Rajasthan from 3 July, marking a phased expansion into two distinct regional markets with evolving consumer demand for premium and craft spirits offerings within the regulated hospitality and retail ecosystem.

Produced in Goa, the brand positions itself within the Indian craft gin category, featuring a botanical-led formulation with juniper-forward profiling and citrus-spice inflections aimed at the premium on-trade and off-trade segments.

HYATT HOTELS

Sajit Sebastian, Director of Sales & Marketing, Hyatt Regency Trivandrum

In his role at Hyatt Regency Trivandrum, Sajit will lead the hotel's commercial strategy, with a focus on strengthening market presence, expanding corporate and MICE business, growing the leisure and wedding segments, and developing strategic partnerships that support long-term business growth. His appointment reinforces Hyatt Regency Trivandrum's commitment to driving sustainable commercial performance while further strengthening the hotel's position as one of Kerala's leading luxury hospitality destinations. His expertise spans corporate and leisure sales, MICE, destination weddings, government and institutional business, and market development, making him a respected leader in India's hospitality industry.

MARRIOTT HOTELS

Rohin Thankappan, Executive Chef, Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai International Airport

Known for his thoughtful approach to modern cuisine and people-first leadership, Chef Rohin will oversee the hotel's restaurants, banqueting operations and in-room dining. His focus will be on refining menus, enhancing guest experiences and fostering a collaborative kitchen culture where creativity and consistency go hand in hand.

Over the course of his career, Chef Rohin has built an impressive portfolio across business hotels and luxury resorts, earning recognition for seamlessly combining classical culinary techniques with contemporary influences. His professional journey includes participation in Michelin chef collaborations and internationally inspired culinary showcases, experiences that have shaped his dynamic yet grounded approach to cooking.

His philosophy centres on delivering memorable dining experiences that respect tradition while embracing evolving guest preferences and global culinary trends.

Girish Divekar, Director of Sales & Marketing, Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai International Airport Appoints

Marking a significant homecoming, Girish returns to the hotel where he first joined as Associate Director of Sales in 2017 and later served as Director of Sales until 2022. Having built a strong understanding of the property, its market dynamics and commercial landscape during his earlier tenure, he now returns to lead the hotel's sales and marketing strategy during an exciting phase of growth and evolution.

Bringing more than 18 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Girish has built a strong track record in sales, revenue generation, and business development. His experience spans key hospitality segments, including rooms, banqueting and catering, and food and beverage, equipping him with a holistic understanding of hotel operations and commercial strategy. In his new role, he will focus on driving revenue growth, enhancing market share, and strengthening the hotel's positioning within the Mumbai market.

Samarth Gangthade, Food and Beverage Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal

Prior to joining Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal, Samarth served as the Food and Beverage Manager at Novotel Chennai Chamiers Road, where he successfully led the hotel's diverse dining portfolio and consistently achieved record revenues through innovative culinary and beverage experiences. His distinguished career also includes leadership roles at Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway, The Ritz-Carlton Pune, P&O Cruises, Oberoi Hotels & Resorts and Royal Caribbean International. Recognized for his expertise in beverage management, nightlife concepts and strategic business planning, Samarth has been instrumental in launching award-winning dining and entertainment experiences throughout his career. In his new role, Samarth will oversee all food and beverage operations at Courtyard by Marriott Bengaluru Hebbal, focusing on enhancing guest experiences, driving operational excellence and introducing innovative dining concepts.

SUBA HOTELS

Kevin Ashley Martis , Vice President – Sales & Marketing, Suba Hotels Ltd.

In his new role, Kevin will lead the sales and marketing strategy for the company's expanding portfolio, which includes Suba Hotels, Click Hotels & Resorts, GenX Hotels, RnB Hotels, as well as the Choice Hotels brands operated by the group—Clarion, Quality, and Comfort. His appointment comes at a time when the company is focused on accelerating brand growth, enhancing guest engagement, and expanding its presence across key markets. With more than two decades of experience in the Indian hospitality industry, Kevin brings a wealth of expertise in strategic sales, marketing, business development, revenue management, brand positioning, and market expansion. Throughout his career, he has consistently delivered strong commercial performance while building high-performing teams and cultivating long-term client relationships.

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