

# LeaderSpeak

APRIL - MAY 2026



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### DEAR FRIENDS,

We are in the midst of the summer travel season and it is heartening to see that our sector continues to be resilient despite the worldwide disruptions and turmoil on account of the uncertain geopolitical landscape. With the Hon'ble Prime Minister's recent clarion call urging citizens to travel within the country, more Indians are choosing to discover the country's diverse tourism offerings. The growing preference for luxury and experiential travel among Indian consumers is also driving demand and elevating industry standards.

In the prevailing environment of instability and ongoing conflicts that have impacted global travel patterns, India stands out as a stable, democratic, culturally rich, and high-potential destination. This changing global environment presents a strategic opportunity for India to attract a larger share of international travelers seeking safer, experience-led, and value-driven destinations. The recent growth and development of infrastructure and improved connectivity has also supported tourism and hospitality. With the right policy support, continued infrastructure expansion, and global positioning, India can emerge as a preferred destination for domestic and foreign travelers alike.

The sector's positive outlook is reflected in rising investor confidence. According to recent industry reports, hotel investments in India reached approximately USD 567 million across 28 transactions in 2025, a significant 67% increase over USD 340 million in 2024. This growth underscores the immense potential of India's hospitality industry and reinforces our collective commitment to delivering exceptional experiences while supporting the country's tourism and economic growth.

Hotels and travel firms are now focusing on building long-term resilience and operational flexibility and India's hospitality sector continues to be supported by strong domestic demand, driven by leisure travel, weddings, and corporate movement. Meanwhile, companies are also exploring diversified growth avenues such as wellness tourism, long-stay formats, branded residences, and immersive experiential travel. Alongside this, technology adoption and expansion into newer tourism circuits are helping the sector stay nimble, competitive, and better prepared for what comes next.

Warm regards,  
**KB Kachru, President**

## HAI NEWS

### HAI Executive Committee reviews industry outlook, skilling initiatives, and growth agenda at Q1 FY27 meeting

During its 109th Executive Committee meeting, held at The LaLiT New Delhi, HAI reviewed the hospitality sector's performance amid ongoing geopolitical challenges and shifting tourism trends, while underscoring the industry's resilience, driven by strong domestic demand and continued investments in hotel development. Key discussions focused on industry skilling and mentoring

initiatives, preparations for the upcoming HAI Hoteliers' Conclave, membership expansion and wider industry representation, promotion of the 'Image & Life Skills Lab' initiative with The Lalit Suri Hospitality School, and strengthening regional collaboration through a proposed MoU with the Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI).

### NEW MEMBER HOTELS

- **HOTEL HARITHAGIRI,**  
Wayanad, Kerala
- **WELCOMHOTEL BY ITC HOTELS,**  
Guntur, Andhra Pradesh
- **RYDGES INN,**  
Kottakkal, Kerala



### Hotel Association of India and The Lalit Suri Hospitality School launch Image & Life Skills Lab in presence of union tourism minister

Strengthening its commitment to building future-ready talent for India's hospitality industry, Hotel Association of India (HAI) & The Lalit Suri Hospitality School (TLSHS) formalized a strategic collaboration with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the School's Faridabad campus on April 22, 2026.

### 12th HAI Hand Hygiene Day celebrated across member properties

The Hotel Association of India, the apex body of the Indian hospitality industry, observed its 12th Hand Hygiene Day with the theme "Action Saves Lives". The initiative was carried out across member hotels in India through staff engagement and community outreach activities.

### 7th HAI Hoteliers Conclave Re-scheduled

The 7th edition of HAI's signature event, the HAI Hoteliers' Conclave, will now be held on September 18, instead of May 4, 2026, announced earlier. The venue remains unchanged: Taj Palace, New Delhi. The theme also remains "Re-engineering Hospitality".

### HAI meets Tourism Secretary Bhuvnesh Kumar, pushes for stronger public-private tourism collaboration

The Hotel Association of India (HAI) recently met with Bhuvnesh Kumar, Secretary, Tourism, Government of India, to introduce the Association and discuss industry priorities. HAI also extended an invitation to him for the valedictory session of the 7th HAI Hoteliers' Conclave, scheduled on September 18 at Taj Palace, New Delhi.

### HAI's Engage Wins Bronze at Adgully IMAGEXX 2026 Awards

HAI's Engage has been recognised at the Adgully IMAGEXX 2026 Awards, winning the Bronze Award in the Corporate Publications category. This recognition is a proud milestone for HAI and reflects the strength of Engage as a platform for purposeful storytelling, insightful content, thoughtful design, and meaningful stakeholder communication.



## Hotel Association hails PM Modi's appeal to promote domestic tourism

K.B. Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India and Chairman – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, said, "Inbound tourism will be one of the defining growth engines for India's hospitality sector in the years ahead. As India attracts more international travellers across leisure, business, medical, spiritual, and cultural segments, the sector must respond with scale, quality, and world-class infrastructure".

## Rising ATF, LPG Prices, Test Hotel Industry Resilience, Future Outlook Positive: HAI

Speaking to Times Now Digital, K.B. Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India (HAI) said "Due to the geopolitical tensions, almost every sector is impacted. Any increase in travel costs due to fuel price hikes could dampen consumer confidence and affect tourism demand."

## Shaping the next decade of hospitality growth in India

Authored article by MP Bezbaruah, Secretary-General, Hotel Association of India. The past decade has tested its resilience and has also revealed its underlying strength. As we look ahead, the question is how sustainably the growth will be shaped.

## West Asia on Fire: What It Could Mean for Indian Hospitality



As KB Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India (HAI) and Chairman – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, points out, structural readiness remains uneven: "India stands at a genuine inflexion point, but capitalising on redirected demand requires honest acknowledgement of structural gaps.

## Hospitality industry finally has an answer to its people problem



KB Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India and Chairman South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, talks about how the push to launch this programme came directly from what HAI was hearing on the ground. "Soft skills are critical to prepare hospitality students, entrants and young professionals for real world hospitality settings.

## HAI backs ATF cap, flags relief for aviation and tourism

The Hotel Association of India (HAI) extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, and the Ministry of Civil Aviation for their thoughtful and



timely intervention in limiting the impact of the Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) price increase on domestic airlines to just 25%.

## HAI joins Nepal Tourism Promotion Program to strengthen India-Nepal ties

Welcoming the initiative, KB Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India (HAI) and Chairman – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group said, "This engagement marks an important step in strengthening institutional ties between India and Nepal's hospitality sectors."

## How Wellness retreats are redefining the hospitality sector in India

Author Article by Charulata Sukhija, Deputy Secretary General, Hotel Association of India. In recent years there has been a marked increase in Wellness tourism. India's wellness tourism industry was valued at around USD 21.23 billion in 2024 and is expected to nearly double to USD 39.85 billion by 2034.



## Outbound travel slows as Indians rethink foreign holidays amid crisis and costs

KB Kachru, president, Hotel Association of India (HAI) and chairman, South Asia at Radisson Hotel Group said India's domestic travel market has emerged as one of the strongest demand engines globally, driving hospitality growth, employment generation and infrastructure utilisation across metros as well as Tier 2 and 3 destinations.

## Amitabh Kant celebrated at HICSA with lifetime achievement award

Amitabh Kant was recognised with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Hotel Investment Conference South Asia (HICSA) 2026, held at Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel & Residences. Past recipients of the coveted HICSA Lifetime Achievement Award include the Late Shri PRS Oberoi (2008), Late Capt. CP Krishnan Nair (2010), Late Shri Inder Sharma (2012), the current HAI President and Chairman – South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, Mr. KB Kachru (2014), and Mr. Nakul Anand (2022), among others.



# GOVERNMENT/POLICY NEWS



## National Consultative Workshop and Review Meeting on "Developing Tourist Destinations to Global Standards"

Union Minister of Tourism Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat emphasised that while the Central Government will continue to extend support for tourism infrastructure and destination development, States/UTs must also actively contribute through integrated planning, destination management, ease of doing business, sustainability and stakeholder participation to realise the shared vision of world-class tourism destinations.

## Attracting Tourists In NER

The Ministry of Tourism promotes tourism in the North Eastern Region (NER) through a range of initiatives. The Ministry organises the International Tourism Mart on a rotational basis in the North Eastern States to showcase tourism products and destinations to domestic and international buyers, media and influencers. Thirteen editions of the Mart have been held so far, with the last (13th) edition conducted in Sikkim in November 2025.

## Framework for the development of 50 tourist destinations as 'global tourist hubs' is ready

The Tourism Ministry is all set to roll out its ambitious challenge-based scheme to boost the country's tourism sector, under which up to 50 destinations across India will be transformed into "global-standard" tourist hubs.

## Schemes For Promotion Of Rural And Religious Tourism

Development and promotion of tourist destinations and tourism products is primarily undertaken by the concerned State Governments/UT Administrations. However, the Ministry of Tourism through its central sector schemes of 'Swadesh Darshan (SD)', Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0), 'Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD)' – a sub-scheme of Swadesh Darshan and 'Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)' complements the efforts of State Governments/UT Administrations in their tourism infrastructure development and amenities across the country at tourist destinations including extending financial assistance to the State Governments/UT Administrations.



## Bhuvnesh Kumar appointed Tourism Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

The Centre conducted a major bureaucratic reshuffle on March 31, 2026, appointing new Secretaries across key ministries, including tourism. Bhuvnesh Kumar, a 1995-batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre and former CEO of the Unique Identification Authority of India, has been named Tourism Secretary, succeeding Srivatsa Krishna of the 1994 batch (Karnataka cadre).

**Delhi to soon emerge as global tourism destination: CM**

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday said Delhi will no longer remain just a 'transit hub' but will emerge as a global tourism destination, with expert inputs set to shape a new tourism policy.



**Meghalaya sanctions ₹3.4 crore to support tourism infrastructure, expands homestay development across state**

Meghalaya Tourism has sanctioned ₹3.40 crore under its Community-led Tourism Infrastructure Scheme and expanded support for homestays across the state. Conrad K Sangma, Chief Minister, Meghalaya, said tourism growth will be driven through infrastructure, connectivity, entrepreneurship, and development of new tourism centres.

**Karnataka's tourist footfall sees fourfold rise, crosses 30 crore visitors post pandemic**

With an increase of 22.17 crore tourists, Karnataka has recorded a sharp post-pandemic surge in overall footfall, with domestic tourism, in particular, witnessing a fourfold rise. In 2021, Karnataka recorded 7.83 crore tourist visits, including 7.97 crore domestic and 0.71 lakh foreign visitors. By 2025, this had jumped sharply to 30.21 crore total visits in the State.



**Ladakh admn grants 'industry' status to hospitality sector, extends incentives**

The Ladakh administration on Wednesday granted "industry status" to hotels and guest houses registered with the Tourism Department, a move aimed at extending incentives, concessions and infrastructure support to the hospitality sector at par with other industries in the Union Territory.

**Telangana govt aims to make state top tourism destination Minister Krishna Rao**

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**State unveils new tourism tagline 'Think India, Think Odisha'**

In a major push to reposition itself on the global tourism map, the state govt on Tuesday unveiled a new brand tagline, 'Think India, Think Odisha'. The rebranding, deputy chief minister Pravati Parida said, marks Odisha's transition from being a lesser-explored destination to a confident and globally competitive tourism hub.

INDUSTRY NEWS

**Investments in star hotels now considered infrastructure investment**



Investments in star hotels now considered infrastructure investment, making it easier for hotels to increase number of rooms, says Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

**IHCL**

**With Indian Ops on 'Autopilot', IHCL to Build Biz Overseas**

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), India's largest hospitality company by market capitalisation, said its domestic business is running on autopilot and it is now turning its attention to international markets, but strictly on an asset-light basis "On the domestic front, we are on autopilot," MD and CEO Puneet Chatwal told ET.



**IHCL highlights integrated wellness as a key pillar of its hospitality vision**

Puneet Chatwal, Managing Director & CEO of IHCL, shared insights on the growing importance of holistic wellness through Atmantan's integrated approach that combines nutrition, yoga, and preventive care, reflecting the evolving role of wellness in modern hospitality and leadership.



**This man built one of India's largest hotel chains... by betting on cities most people ignored**

Since joining Radisson Hotel Group in 1998, K.B. Kachru, Chairman – South Asia, played a pivotal role in building the brand's India presence from the ground up, driving expansion through bold investments in Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets and establishing it as one of the country's leading international hotel chains.

**Lemon Tree Hotels strengthens pan-India footprint with new signings, openings, and sustainability milestones across key markets**

The hospitality chain expanded its footprint across multiple high-growth and tourism-driven markets in India and Nepal while reaching 100% green certification across its owned hotel portfolio.

**IHCL accelerates expansion with strategic acquisitions and new hospitality signings across key leisure and business destinations**

The Tata Group-backed hospitality major strengthened its portfolio through the acquisition of a majority stake in Brij Hospitality and new Gateway and Vivanta signings across Gurugram, Goa, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh.

## Room with match view: Rajasthan gets ready for India's first stadium hotel

Radisson Hotel Group is launching India's first stadium hotel in Nathdwara, near Udaipur, as part of a push into its second-largest market globally after China. The Brussels-headquartered chain is also in talks with the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association for a second stadium hotel in Dharamshala.



## India's Luxury Hotels Are Finding a New Anchor, and It's Not Foreign Tourists

Oberoi's parent company says geopolitical disruptions are reshaping travel patterns, but India's affluent travelers are increasingly insulating luxury hotels from global shocks.



## Chalet Hotels bets on leisure markets amid demand boom

KK Raheja Corp-backed hotel ownership company Chalet Hotels Ltd is deepening its focus on city hotels, airport properties and leisure resorts as demand continues to outpace supply, a top executive said.

## Tourism around Pahalgam picking up; upcoming Amarnath Yatra litmus test

Pahalgam's tourism is slowly reviving after a devastating attack last year. However, several tourist spots remain shut, affecting hundreds of pony wallas.



## The Leela marks 40 years of luxury hospitality with strong financial growth and talent development initiatives

The luxury hospitality brand celebrated four decades of Indian luxury while reporting robust FY26 financial performance and launching the Leela Centre of Excellence in partnership with Le Cordon Bleu and GD Goenka University to strengthen future hospitality talent.

## IHG Hotels & Resorts expands India footprint through resort, regional, and strategic partnership developments

IHG strengthened its presence in India with new hotel signings in Alwar and Jagdalpur, while partnering with the Adani Group to develop five hotels across key Indian cities, marking Adani's entry into the hospitality sector.



## Airport Infra Push Helps Boost Hospitality Growth

India's expanding aviation infrastructure is emerging as a major catalyst for growth in the hospitality sector, with leading hotel chains ramping up investments in airport linked properties amid rising air traffic, improved regional connectivity and the development of new urban corridors.

## India's Hotel investment rose 67% to \$567 million in 2025, says JLL

India's hospitality sector saw strong momentum in 2025, with hotel investments rising 67 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) to about \$567 million across 28 transactions, underscoring growing investor confidence in tourism infrastructure and demand across market segments, said real estate consultant JLL India.



## The Fern Hotels & Resorts expands footprint with new signings in Gujarat and Bihar

The eco-sensitive hospitality chain strengthened its presence in key regional markets with the signing of new properties in the Greater Rann of Kutch and Patna, reinforcing its growth strategy across emerging destinations in India.

## Sarovar Hotels accelerates expansion across India and Africa with new premium hospitality openings

The hotel chain strengthened its presence in key leisure and high-growth markets with new property launches in Pahalgam, Bhubaneswar, and Kampala, reinforcing its domestic and international expansion strategy.

## Radisson Hotel Group accelerates India expansion with new resort and metro market signings

The hospitality major strengthened its presence across key leisure and urban destinations with two resort signings in Coorg and two new hotel developments in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, adding over 200 keys to its growing India portfolio.

## India's hotel construction landscape shows stable core costs, rising fit-out spend

A recently published report titled Building Smarter: Construction Cost Insights 2025 by Hotelivate-Savills presents an analysis of construction cost trends across select cities and tiers in India, covering key real estate sectors including hospitality, office, industrial & logistics, retail, and residential.

## FAITH to host Second Conclave on July 16-17, 2026, at Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi

Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) has announced the holding of its Second Conclave on July 16-17, 2026, at Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi.

## The Hyatt Place brand debuts in Bhopal, bringing a new era of comfort to the city's Hospitality Landscape

Hyatt Hotels Corporation announced the opening of Hyatt Place Bhopal, expanding the Hyatt Place brand's footprint in key markets around the world. The 99-key upscale hotel greets guests with thoughtfully designed guestrooms, comfortable social spaces and efficient services.

## Radisson To Create Up To 80k Jobs By 2030

Radisson Hotel Group expects to create an estimated 65,000-80,000 job opportunities in India with its targeted 500 properties by 2030, Radisson Hotel Group executive vice president and global chief development officer Elie Younes said.

## Table talk. Building Lalit hotels with emotion

This April, the Lalit Suri Hospitality group embarked on a major transformation. Lalit 2.0 will be the second such change exercise of the group, says Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson and MD.



Contact us- [www.hotelassociationofindia.com](http://www.hotelassociationofindia.com)

Hotel Association of India, B 212-214, Som Dutt Chamber-I, Bhikaji Cama Place. New Delhi-110 066, India  
Tel : +91-11-2617 1110/14, [info@hotelassociationofindia.com](mailto:info@hotelassociationofindia.com), [hai@hotelassociationofindia.com](mailto:hai@hotelassociationofindia.com),