

LeaderSpeak

FEB-MAR 2026



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The hospitality industry continues to advance with renewed momentum and a clear sense of purpose.

The first two months of 2026 have set a strong and encouraging tone for the year for the sector. The intersection of increased MICE activity and extended holiday periods highlighted the sustained demand for both business and leisure travel. India witnessed a notable boom in international delegate arrivals, creating valuable opportunities for the hospitality sector to present the country's rich cultural diversity and service excellence on a global stage. This strong momentum pushed occupancy levels to near capacity across key markets, highlighting the persistent demand–supply imbalance facing the sector

The Union Budget 2026–27 has provided another thrust to the sector. The government's continued emphasis on infrastructure development, the East Coast Tourism Corridor, medical value tourism, the proposed development of 15 archaeological sites, and the establishment of content creator labs are progressive measures that will diversify India's tourism ecosystem. The announcement of a National Institute of Hospitality is particularly significant and aligns closely with HAI's long-standing commitment to talent development through structured mentorship and capability-building initiatives. This step will play an important role in creating industry-ready professionals and strengthening the long-term foundation of Indian hospitality. Yet our key asks for infrastructure status and industry benefits for hotels remain unaddressed.

The uncertainties and apprehensions that are before us because of the turmoil in the Middle East and West Asia cannot be ignored. We have to constantly and carefully watch the developments and remain vigilant to adjust to the emerging needs and situation.

The resilience of the sector may be tested once again. Together, with trust and purpose in hand, let us face the challenges that lie ahead with collaboration, innovation, empathy and commitment to excellence in service.

Warm regards,
KB Kachru, President

HAI NEWS

29th AGM and 108th EC Meeting Mark Leadership Updates and New Member Participation

The Association held its 29th AGM on March 5, followed by the 108th Executive Committee Meeting—the final one of FY 2025–26. The AGM was attended by nearly 100 members. Key resolutions included approval of the FY 2024–25 financial results and the appointment of auditors for the next year. Elections to six ExCom posts were also held.

During the EC Meeting, the Management Committee was constituted, with Mr.R. Shankar selected as Honorary Treasurer following the retirement of Dr. Sanjay Sethi. Mr.Shwetank Singh CEO and M.D of Chalet Hotels Limited and Mr.Mandeep Surie GM IHCL SeleQtions are the new Members inducted in the executive committee.

NEW MEMBER HOTELS

- **TAJ THE TREES,**
Mumbai
- **TAJ GANGA KUTIR RESORT & SPA,**
Raichak, West Bengal



HOTEL ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

HAI interacts with Senior government officials including State tourism Secretaries and Niti Aayog

Over the past few months, HAI has actively engaged with senior government officials, including State Tourism Secretaries and NITI Aayog, to address key ease of doing business challenges for the hospitality sector. In collaboration with WTTCII, HAI presented a comprehensive industry perspective

covering issues such as licensing complexities, high operational costs, GST-related challenges, and FAR restrictions. The presentation, which incorporated state-specific concerns shared by HAI members, was first discussed during an industry interaction convened by the Ministry of Tourism in January 2026

and later presented to NITI Aayog in early February. Several follow-up meetings have since taken place, with encouraging developments, including indications that hotels in select established destinations may soon be granted infrastructure status under a new policy framework.

HAI IN NEWS



Restaurants, hotels seek minimum assured allocation of LPG supplies

Restaurants and hotels have sought minimum assured allocation of commercial LPG cylinder supplies. This comes at a time when industry players across key cities are facing shortages amid the ongoing West Asia conflict. In a statement, KB Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India (HAI), and Chairman–South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, added that irregular and non-availability of LPG will adversely impact the sector.



A defining decade for hospitality, but the agenda ahead remains crucial

Mr. KB Kachru has been featured in BW Hotelier for the Anniversary Issue, which talks about important and defining phase for India's tourism and hospitality sector



Why hospitality needs policy reforms to achieve India's tourism goals

In this session of Guru Gyaan, MP Bezbaruah shared his rich insights on the Indian tourism sector, reflecting on its current landscape, key reforms, and the broader developments shaping its future trajectory.

Fascinating Insights on Travel & Tourism and jobs in the sector

In the Reward Case webinar, industry leaders discussed the current state of tourism in India, key challenges and emerging opportunities in the sector, while also offering career guidance to students aspiring to join the industry. MP Bezbaruah participated in the session, sharing his insights and perspectives on the way forward.



Delhi Hotel Room Rates Hovering Around Rs 60k/night, Mirroring Demand



The Hotel Association of India (HAI) Wednesday highlighted weighted average room rates in the national capital are ranging between Rs. 40,000 and Rs. 60,000 per night during February 16-20, coinciding with the AI Impact Summit that will feature several top global attendees.

Republic Day long weekend fuels surge in travel and hotel bookings



KB Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India and Chairman, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, told PTI that the long weekend is witnessing strong traction across the hospitality sector, underscoring a decisive shift in traveller behaviour towards shorter yet high-value getaways.

Union Budget 2026: HAI urges tailored reforms to lift hospitality growth, resilience

The Hotel Association of India on Wednesday called policymakers to prioritise sector-specific reforms to drive growth and resilience in the hospitality sector, while reiterating demand for infrastructure status and allowing of industry benefits to hotels.



The Geography Of Romance

This reframing is reflected in travel patterns, as well. According to K.B. Kachru, President of the Hotel Association of India, solo travellers are among the fastest-growing segments redefining romantic travel experiences around self-connection and emotional well-being.



The Great Indian Festive Getaway: A Testament to India's Rising Travel Confidence



The festive cheer of 2025 ushered in a new wave of optimism for India's hospitality sector. Across the country, hotels are witnessing record occupancies, driven by a strong resurgence in domestic travel, a surge in leisure demand, and an increased appetite for experiential travel.

Resilience of India's tourism and hospitality sector and the role of policy interventions in sustaining recovery and growth



Indian tourism and hospitality have shown remarkable resilience in recent years, emerging as key drivers of economic recovery and

inclusive growth. In spite of global headwinds and lingering challenges, proactive policy interventions have helped restore momentum in both domestic and international travel, reinforcing the sector's strategic importance to India's broader economic agenda.

'Upskilling and bridging the talent gap in the sector is a key focus area for HAI': Charulata Sukhija



With a career spanning four decades, Charulata Sukhija stands among the most experienced voices in India's hospitality sector. Currently Deputy Secretary General of the Hotel Association of India (HAI), the apex national body representing the hospitality industry, she has been part of the sector since 1985.

GOVERNMENT/POLICY NEWS

Union Budget 2026-27 Delivers Unprecedented Boost to Tourism, Culture and Heritage: Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat



The Union Minister of Tourism and Culture, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, has welcomed the Union Budget 2026-27, stating that it provides unprecedented and far-beyond-expectations encouragement to the tourism and culture sectors.

Promotion of MICE Tourism

The Ministry has introduced 'Meet in India' as a specialized sub-brand within the 'Incredible India' campaign. This sub-brand aims to enhance promotional initiatives, showcasing India as an appealing MICE destination equipped with top-tier connectivity, cutting-edge infrastructure, a vibrant knowledge hub and a plethora of distinctive tourist attractions.





Incredible India 2.0 Initiative

As part of the Union Budget announcement for the year 2017–18, the Ministry of Tourism launched the Incredible India 2.0 campaign. The campaign represented a shift from a generic promotional approach to a more focused, market-specific and theme-based strategy for the promotion of tourism in the country.

Under Swadesh Darshan 2.0 Ministry of Tourism sanctioned 53 projects for Rs.2208.31 Crore



Development and promotion of tourism including aspects related to environmental sustainability, local community participation, safety, sanitation etc. primarily falls under the purview of the concerned State Government/UT Administration.

India Tourism organises B2B Tourism Meet in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar to promote Domestic Tourism.

India Tourism, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, under the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in collaboration with the Karnataka Tourism Society organized a Buyer–Seller (B2B) Tourism Meet to promote domestic tourism on 29 January 2026 at Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar.



Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat Highlights ITDC as a Multi-Dimensional Growth Engine

The Ministry of Tourism, through its ongoing Central Sector Schemes of Swadesh Darshan (SD) and Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) supplements the efforts of the State Governments and Union Territories by providing financial assistance for tourism infrastructure development, including in Tripura and Madhya Pradesh.



STATE NEWS

Telangana moves to establish state Medical Tourism Society and Hyderabad MVT hub

Telangana Tourism organised a roundtable bringing together senior representatives from government and industry to deliberate on the institutional role, governance structure and long-term direction of the proposed Telangana State Medical Tourism Society (TGMTS)



Gujarat unveils 4.08 lakh crore budget for tourism, AI, sports infrastructure

Gujarat Finance Minister Kanubhai Desai on February 18, 2026 tabled the State Budget for the financial year 2026–27 in the State Assembly, focusing on digital governance, tourism promotion, and creation of sports infrastructure ahead of the 2030 Commonwealth Games

Kerala witnesses record of over 2.58 cr tourist arrivals in 2025, says Minister Riyas

Tourism Minister P A Mohammed Riyas said that 2025 witnessed the highest number of tourist arrivals in Kerala's history. Speaking to reporters, he said that 2,58,80,365 tourists from outside the state visited Kerala last year, the highest since the state's formation.



Won't promote Goa as a 'cheap' destination, says state tourism minister

Even as the debate on the decline of Goa as a tourist destination rages on, the state's tourism minister is confident of its growth, and says the state is now demonstrably a "luxury" destination

INDUSTRY NEWS



HRAO Celebrates 40 Years of Driving Tourism and Hospitality Growth in Odisha

HRAO has consistently worked alongside the Ministry of Tourism and the Government of Odisha to encourage investment, infrastructure development, skill enhancement, and sustainable tourism practices.



IHCL Registers India's First Sound Mark for 'Taj'

IHCL has secured trademark registration for the 'Tar sonic sound, the first sound mark registration for a brand in the country's hospitality sector.



RevPAR Will Continue To Grow In The Range Of 9–11%: Indian Hotels

Puneet Chhatwal, MD & CEO, IHCL, tells CNBC-TV18 that the company expects to sustain double-digit revenue growth in Q4, with RevPAR projected to rise by 9–11%.

ROHL Expands Footprint with New Signings in Jaipur, Udaipur and Jim Corbett



Royal Orchid Hotels Ltd (ROHL) has expanded its footprint with the signing of new properties in Jaipur, Udaipur, and Jim Corbett, strengthening its presence across key leisure and heritage destinations in North and West India.

Leela Palaces incorporates new subsidiary for luxury hotels, resorts



Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts on Monday said it has incorporated a wholly owned subsidiary to own, operate, manage, and develop luxury hotels and resorts under the "The Leela" brand.

IHCL Accelerates Growth with Multiple Signings, 1,000+ Ginger Keys Added, Expands to 615 Hotels Amid Double-Digit Q4 Revenue Growth

Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) continued its expansion momentum with new signings in Bengaluru and Sakaleshpur, the opening of a 100-key Ginger hotel in Tuticorin, and agreements for seven additional Ginger properties adding over 1,000 keys. The company's portfolio has grown to 615 hotels under its Accelerate 2030 strategy, while delivering double-digit Q4 revenue growth driven by strong room rates.



Wyndham opens new Ramada hotel in Bodh Gaya

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has strengthened its India portfolio with the opening of Ramada by Wyndham Bodh Gaya Mahabodhi, marking the brand's entry into Bihar.

Sarovar Hotels strengthens its leadership team with key appointments

Sarovar Hotels has appointed Pavan Kumar as Director – Institutional Hospitality, Sonuraj K. R. as General Manager – Pre Openings, and Anuj Sharma as Director – Design Services within the Corporate Development team.



Lemon Tree Hotels Announces Reorganisation with Warburg Pincus Backing; Expands Portfolio in Uttarakhand and Varanasi

Lemon Tree Hotels Limited has approved a strategic reorganisation alongside investment from Warburg Pincus to streamline operations and unlock long-term value. The company also signed new properties in Uttarakhand and Varanasi, strengthening its presence in key leisure and spiritual markets.



Wyndham Hotels & Resorts signs Dolce by Wyndham Resorts in Goa and Udaipur



Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, announced the signing of two new Dolce by Wyndham properties in Goa and Udaipur, marking the brand's entry into India and underscoring Wyndham's continued expansion into the upscale leisure sector.

CHALET HOTELS
Chalet Hotels to open its first Ritz Carlton in Hyderabad

Chalet Hotels will launch its first Ritz Carlton hotel in India in Hyderabad, MD and CEO Shwetank Singh said.



ITC Hotels Secures Yashobhoomi Land for 5-Star Project; Expands with New Welcomhotel Openings in Dehradun and Mohali

ITC Hotels has secured land at Yashobhoomi for a new five-star property while expanding its footprint with the launch of Welcomhotel by ITC Hotels, Madhuban Dehradun and Welcomhotel Mohali - Chandigarh, strengthening its presence across North India.



IHG eyes 400 hotel properties by 2030

IHG Hotels & Resorts is betting on a massive expansion in India, aiming to grow its footprint by more than 50% year-on-year over the next four years.

IHG Hotels & Resorts signs Garner Bhiwadi, bringing the brand to the National Capital Region



IHG Hotels & Resorts, announced the signing of a franchise agreement for Garner Bhiwadi, continuing the rapid rollout of its newest midscale conversion brand in India.

Delhi airport aims to improve family travel

Dedicated terminal entry gates, exclusive family check-in counters, priority security lanes, and designated family seating areas at food courts offering specially curated kids' menus — Delhi airport has some new facilities now for families travelling together.



IMD spotlights IHCL's framework 'Paathya'

Paathya, Indian Hotels Company's (IHCL) blueprint for sustainable and responsible hospitality, has been featured in a detailed case study by the International Institute for Management Development (IMD Business School), Lausanne, Switzerland.

Sarovar Hotels launches Tulip Inn Gurugram Sector 39, Sarovar Hotels expands North India footprint with new openings in Jaipur and Mathura

Sarovar Hotels, in partnership with RRK Hospitality LLP, has announced the launch of Tulip Inn Gurugram Sector 39, a midscale business hotel catering to corporate travellers and small-format events. The property operates under the brand standards of Louvre Hotels Group.



Hyatt Place Gurgaon Udyog Vihar introduces new suites, Hyatt Place Butwal announces opening

Hyatt Place Gurgaon Udyog Vihar unveiled its new suite category, designed to offer guests an elevated stay experience in the upper upscale segment.



Radisson Hotel expands in India's Spiritual hubs

The move reflects a strategic, fast-mover approach in emerging spiritual hubs while supporting the government's vision for sustainable, inclusive, and faith-led tourism, it stated.



Orange economy an emerging growth lever

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99L foreign tourists visited India

India's tourism sector has witnessed a remarkable resurgence in 2024, with foreign tourist arrivals reaching 99.5 lakh and international tourist arrivals climbing to 2.05 crore, marking a 14.85% increase compared to the pre-pandemic benchmark year of 2019.

