

# LeaderSpeak

AUG-SEP 2026



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As India readies to welcome the approaching festive season, we reflect on the last two months that have been eventful — HAI hosted its 7th Hoteliers' Conclave on 18th September at Taj Palace, New Delhi, even as the sector's own numbers gave us plenty to talk about. Over 300 delegates from across the hospitality and allied ecosystem came together at the Event. I was glad to have Union Tourism and Culture Minister Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat inaugurate the event. The theme, "Re-Engineering Hospitality," was deliberate. Through the platform, the Hotel Association of India once again made the case for hospitality to be recognised as a national economic priority—not merely an adjunct to tourism policy, but a sector with the potential to drive employment, investment and foreign exchange in its own right.

Away from the conclave stage, the underlying data gives us real reason for confidence. It's been a year since the GST rationalisation on room tariffs came into effect, the early signs — stronger mid-market bookings, better affordability for the domestic traveller — validate the case we made. We will keep pursuing the issues of ITC and other GST related concerns.

As we look ahead, HAI remains committed to working closely with the government and industry partners to help create an environment where hospitality can scale sustainably, create quality employment and contribute meaningfully to India's economic and social development. The opportunity before us is significant. With a coordinated approach and a shared vision, the hospitality industry can play an even greater role in shaping India's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047.

*Warm regards,*  
**KB Kachru, President**

## HAI NEWS

### HAI Holds 110th Executive Committee Meeting, Reviews Key Industry Priorities

HAI's 110th Executive Committee Meeting, held on 17 August 2026, focused on preparations for the upcoming HAI Hoteliers' Conclave and key priorities for the hospitality sector. The Committee highlighted the industry's resilience amid ongoing challenges, while discussing emerging opportunities including Bhogapuram Airport and West Bengal's proposed tourist hubs. Members also reviewed HAI's key initiatives, industry representations, media outreach and emerging concerns around FSSAI raids and AI-led search and branding.

### From Tourism Potential to Economic Powerhouse: 7th HAI Hotelier's Conclave Charts the Road to 2047

The Hotel Association of India (HAI) hosted the 7th HAI Hoteliers' Conclave on the 18th of September at Taj Palace, New Delhi, bringing together policymakers, tourism authorities, hospitality leaders and industry stakeholders to deliberate on how India's tourism and hospitality can make a larger contribution to the country's Vision 2047. Inaugurated by Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture, the Conclave, themed 'Re-Engineering Hospitality', focused on the structural changes required to enable the hospitality sector to scale sustainably and play a greater role in India's growth story, with discussions spanning investment, infrastructure, employment, regional development and policy reform.



### PM Modi Underscores HAI & Industry's Role in India's Journey Towards Viksit Bharat

In his message to the apex body, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has extended his congratulations to the Hotel Association of India (HAI) on the Hoteliers' Conclave 2026 and highlighted that HAI has an important role to play in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047 in ensuring that the tourism potential of every region contributes to the prosperity of the people.

### HAI Welcomes K.B. Kachru's Nomination to NCHMCT Board of Governors



The Hotel Association of India (HAI) proudly congratulates Shri K.B. Kachru, President, HAI and Chairman — South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, on his nomination as an expert member to the Board of Governors (BoG) of the National Council of Hotel Management and Catering Technology (NCHMCT). The nomination is a recognition of his decades-long contribution to the Indian hospitality sector and his continued commitment to strengthening hospitality education, skilling and industry readiness.

## KB Kachru receives IATO Hall of Fame Award 2026 for contribution to India's tourism and hospitality growth

K.B. Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India (HAI) and Chairman—South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, has received the IATO Hall of Fame Award 2026 for his contribution to India's tourism and hospitality sector.



## HAI advocating for greater capital access to the Indian hospitality sector: KB Kachru

India currently has about 200,000–220,000 branded hotel rooms, which is starkly inadequate for a country of its size and aspiration. "This gap isn't static; it's widening, with demand for branded rooms projected to grow at 8–10% CAGR through FY28," said KB Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India (HAI).

## How Indians are spending on experiences and lifestyle



KB Kachru, President of the Hotel Association of India and Chairman – South Asia at Radisson Hotel Group, said demand is growing for short stays where travellers spend on food and experiences alongside accommodation.

## From stay to story: How local communities, craftsmanship and culture are shaping experiential travel



Globally travel is changing in a way that is subtle, yet significant. The question travellers ask today is no longer simply, "Where should I stay?" Increasingly, it is, "What can I experience here that I cannot experience anywhere else?" India is no exception to the trend.

## Ease of Doing Business for Hotels: Unlocking Hospitality's Full Potential

India stands at an important inflection point in its tourism and hospitality journey. The country has the potential to emerge as one of the world's leading tourism economies, supported by an increasing disposable income, rising domestic travel, improving connectivity and increasing global interest in India as a destination for business and leisure.

## While corporate demand soars in business hubs, larger opportunity lies in blended-demand destinations: KB Kachru

President, HAI says that corporate demand remains important in business hubs and emerging commercial centres. However, the larger opportunity lies in blended-demand destinations, where multiple segments support the market across seasons.



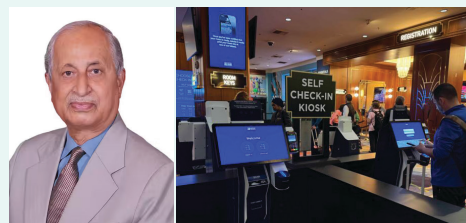
## Delhi hotels to roll out desi welcome for BRICS leaders



"India currently has only about two lakh branded hotel rooms and for a country of our size and aspiration, that is starkly inadequate," said KB Kachru, president, Hotel Association of India, and chairman, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group.

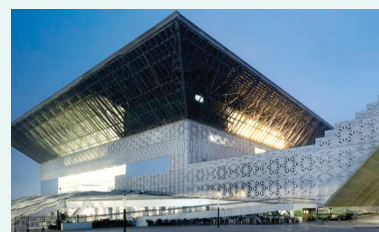
## Technology Checks in, Hospitality Stays

"Technology is one of the strongest and decisive influencers affecting tourism competitiveness," said MP Bezbaruah, Secretary General, Hotel Association of India, and former Secy, Ministry of Tourism.



## Why destination management determines tourism success?

A destination cannot succeed through the efforts of a single stakeholder. Kachru feels that hotels, tourism boards, local authorities, airlines, transport operators, heritage managers, and local communities have to collaborate on a unified destination strategy. Without coordination, marketing efforts may not match the actual infrastructure and services provided.



## Beyond Ballroom: Redefining Hospitality for India's MICE Future

The interview highlights on how India's MICE industry is moving from a venue-centric model to an experience- and outcome-driven ecosystem, with hotels evolving from accommodation and banquet providers into strategic partners for business events

## India needs policy reforms, not subsidies, to unlock hospitality investment: HAI

Highlighting India's limited branded hotel inventory KB Kachru, President, Hotel Association of India (HAI), said that regulatory bottlenecks continue to slow capital inflow despite strong tourism potential. "We don't want subsidies. We want the government to tweak its policies so that the industry can deliver for the nation."



## Minister proposes 15 projects to boost tourist experience in TN



Rope-cars, cruise and ferry routes, AI-enabled tourist safety kiosks and dedicated security teams at major destinations—these are some initiatives planned by TN govt to upgrade tourism infrastructure in the state and attract more visitors..

## Gajendra Singh Shekhawat at Idea Exchange

Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on the BJP's efforts to connect with the younger generation, navigating the challenges facing the tourism sector and the government's response to the student protest at Jantar Mantar.



## Govt launches e-group visa for tourists arriving on cruise vessels

As the govt focuses on positioning India as a leading global cruise destination, the home ministry has introduced e-group visit visa (cruise) for foreign tourists arriving in India on cruise vessels which follow a fixed and predetermined itinerary, reports Bharti Jain.



## Airbnb and Ministry of Tourism partner to strengthen India's homestay ecosystem and unlock tourism growth across emerging destinations

As part of the two-year collaboration, Airbnb will act as a capacity-building and digital onboarding partner to the Ministry of Tourism. Through host workshops, training resources and destination-promotion initiatives, the partnership aims to strengthen hosting capabilities while spotlighting India's rich cultural heritage, diverse destinations and authentic travel experiences.

## Development Of Tourism In The North-Eastern Region

Ministry of Tourism as part of its ongoing endeavour, promotes various tourism destinations and products of India including the states of North Eastern region in a holistic manner, through various initiatives including promotional events, assistance to State Governments/UT Administrations for organising fairs and festivals, participation in exhibitions, websites, social media etc.

## Tourism growth must reach beyond popular destinations and create opportunities for local communities: Union Minister of Tourism & Culture Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

The Ministry of Tourism celebrated World Tourism Day 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, today, in the presence of Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, senior officials of the Ministry and the tourism industry representatives.

## India and Italy agree to strengthen bilateral cooperation in tourism

The 2nd India-Italy Joint Working Group (JWG) on Tourism was held on 29 September 2026, co-chaired by Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and Ms. Emanuela Tripi, Secretary-General, Ministry of Tourism, Italy.

## Ministry of Tourism Gears Up for Special Campaign 6.0 with Focus on Swachhata and Reducing Pendency

Ministry of Tourism gears up for the implementation of Special Campaign 6.0, being undertaken by the Government of India from October 2 to October 31, 2026, with a focus on Swachhata and reducing pendency across Government. This year, the Government-wide Campaign will also place special emphasis on the effective collection, segregation and disposal of e-waste.

# STATE NEWS

## Odisha Steps Up Global Tourism Push, Seeks UNESCO Recognition for Rath Yatra

Odisha is strengthening its tourism push by seeking UNESCO recognition for the iconic Jagannath Rath Yatra, while simultaneously rolling out measures to attract investment and position the state as a global tourism destination.

## UP Tourism's first motorcycle trail sparks fresh interest in hidden heritage and weekend road trips

A two day motorcycle expedition through Bundelkhand has done more than introduce riders to Kalinjar Fort. It has turned many first time visitors into advocates for one of Uttar Pradesh's most overlooked tourism regions.

## Haryana opens key tourism assets to PPP development, State tourism minister says

Speaking at the ASSOCHAM National Tourism Conclave, Dr Arvind Sharma, Tourism Minister, Haryana, announced plans to privatise and redevelop state properties under Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). He highlighted upcoming tenders for the 10-acre Pinjore Yadavindra Gardens and the Rai Ethnic India project along the GT Road.

## Nagaland ranks 26th in Tourism Ministry's performance framework

Nagaland has been placed 26th among states and Union territories in the Tourism Ministry's State Tourism Performance Framework (STPF), even as the state recorded a marginal rise in domestic tourist visits and a decline in foreign tourist visits in 2025.

## West Bengal CM Unveils Logo to Boost Tourism

West Bengal chief minister Suwendu Adhikari on Friday unveiled a new logo and brand identity for the state tourism department while adding that the government, in its first budget earlier this year, had allocated around ₹500 crore to boost the tourism sector.

## Uttar Pradesh deepens Japan ties with tourism, investment push

Uttar Pradesh has showcased its historical and cultural tourism offerings to a 200-member Japanese delegation from Yamanashi Prefecture, as the five-day visit also seeks to deepen investment and business ties between the state and Japan.

## Delhi hotels face room crunch ahead of BRICS Summit, tariffs hit six figures

Delhi's luxury hotel market is witnessing a sharp squeeze in room availability and a steep rise in tariffs ahead of the BRICS Summit, with several marquee properties either showing no rooms for key dates or quoting rates running into six figures a night, as reported by news agency PTI.

## Meghalaya-Assam taxi standoff ends, tourist travel eased

A fortnight-long standoff between tourist taxi operators of Meghalaya and Assam following violence last month has ended with both states agreeing to remove operational hurdles and ensure tourist vehicles can move freely across the inter-state border.

## Goa minister calls for plus-one economy to make tourists stay longer

Speaking at the 56th annual convention of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India in Varanasi, Rohan Khaunte said the next phase of tourism growth should focus not merely on increasing tourist footfall but on extending stays, boosting visitor spending and creating greater value across destinations.

## Tourist inflow puts Kashmir's fragile ecosystem and infrastructure under strain

The sharp rise in tourist arrivals at Kashmir's key destinations is putting growing pressure on local infrastructure and the region's fragile Himalayan Ecosystem.

## Lemon Tree Hotels Expands Footprint with New Properties Across Key Leisure and Business Destinations



Lemon Tree Hotels continues to strengthen its pan-India presence with multiple property openings and signings across key markets. The group opened Keys Prima by Lemon Tree Hotels, Kempty Road, Mussoorie, its second property in the hill station, taking its Uttarakhand portfolio to 10 operational hotels. It also expanded across Bharuch, Jabalpur, Vadodara and Nashik, while announcing new signings in Manali, Visakhapatnam and Bodhgaya. The group further entered into a joint venture with RJ Corp for the development of Aurika Shillong, underlining its continued focus on expanding its portfolio across leisure, business and emerging destinations.

## Hotels lean on domestic demand in Q1 as global travel falters

India's listed hotel companies entered fiscal year 2027 (FY27) facing disrupted international travel and weaker foreign tourist arrivals as the West Asia conflict escalated.

## Hyatt Expands India Footprint with Focus on Emerging Markets

Hyatt is accelerating its India expansion, with a focus on emerging business and industrial hubs and plans to significantly scale its footprint over the next five years. The opening of Hyatt Place Vithalapur in Gujarat marks the brand's entry into the growing industrial destination, while Hyatt is also exploring acquisitions of local hospitality brands and a homegrown brand tailored to Indian travellers as part of its broader growth strategy.



## Chalet Hotels Accelerates Expansion with Athiva-Led Growth Strategy

Chalet Hotels is scaling up its hospitality portfolio through the Athiva brand, expanding into new markets while adopting a more diversified growth model beyond its traditional ownership-led approach. The company has added 381 keys across Hyderabad and Pune to its pipeline and opened Athiva Pulse in Navi Mumbai, strengthening its presence across key urban markets. Alongside portfolio expansion, Chalet is also advancing its Parivartan initiative, targeting 5,000 sustainable hospitality livelihoods by 2030.

## The Leela Accelerates Luxury Hospitality Growth

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts is witnessing strong financial momentum, with Q1 net profit rising more than fivefold to 148.8 crore and operating revenue increasing 28% to 352 crore. Building on sustained demand for luxury travel and premium experiences, the company plans to expand its portfolio from 15 to 25 properties by 2030. Alongside its growth strategy, The Leela is strengthening its brand identity through initiatives such as 'Melodies by The Leela', celebrating Indian art, heritage and luxury.

## Marriott launches Project Prarambh



Marriott International announced Project Prarambh, an initiative aimed at helping young people from vulnerable communities secure formal jobs and build sustainable careers in India's hospitality sector, in partnership with The Job Plus and the Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC).

## Radisson Hotel Group Accelerates India Expansion Beyond Metros

Radisson Hotel Group is strengthening its India growth strategy by expanding beyond major metros into emerging urban hubs, regional towns, religious tourism destinations and high-potential leisure markets. The group remains on track to reach 500 hotels in India by 2030, with recent signings and openings across Ongole, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Rajkot and Sasan Gir reinforcing its first-mover approach. The group is also focusing on hotel conversions and sustainability-led initiatives, while catering to rising domestic travel, business demand, MICE and leisure tourism across newer destinations.



## IHCL Accelerates Expansion Across Emerging Leisure and Business Destinations

Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) is expanding its presence across emerging business, leisure, religious and wildlife destinations, with recent signings and openings spanning Karaikudi, Rameswaram, Agartala, Nava Raipur, Athirapilly, Goa, Jim Corbett and Tadoba. The company is strengthening its multi-brand portfolio across markets while combining regional heritage, local experiences and contemporary hospitality. Its expansion also includes large-format developments such as the 300-key Taj Rameswaram and new properties under brands including Taj, Gateway, Ginger, SeleQtions and Tree of Life.

## ITC Hotels Accelerates Expansion with 250-Hotel Target

ITC Hotels is strengthening its growth strategy, targeting a portfolio of 250 hotels and over 22,000 keys over the next five years, supported by a pipeline of 78 properties. The company is focusing on destination expansion, Responsible Luxury, sustainability and digital transformation, while continuing to tap emerging leisure markets. Its signing of Storii Assagao in Goa further expands its presence in the state and reflects its focus on distinctive, experience-led hospitality offerings.

## Sarovar Hotels bets on India's emerging destinations as it charts course to 400 hotels by 2029: CEO Jatin Khanna

As India's hospitality sector rides a fresh investment cycle, fuelled by robust domestic travel, infrastructure development and the rapid rise of Tier II and Tier III markets, Sarovar is doubling down on a strategy that has quietly differentiated it from many of its peers.

## The LaLiT's Hospitality with a Heart: people, purpose and authentic guest experiences: Harmeet Kaur

The LaLiT Hotels has unveiled its Hospitality with a Heart movement, formalising a three-decade-old philosophy centred on being homegrown, inclusive and sustainable. In an interview with ET HospitalityWorld, Harmeet Kaur, general manager, corporate marketing and customer experience, outlined how the group is deepening outreach to guests and employees.