

MYSTIC EAST

...an unexplored horizon

A Bi-monthly Magazine by HRAEI | Vol 8 | Issue 1 | January - February 2022

VISION 2022

The future of the hospitality industry looks bright in the long run, despite temporary setbacks



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I welcome the decision to extend ECLGS (Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme) up to March 2023 and increase in guarantee cover to Rs 5 lakh crore, earmarking an additional Rs 50,000 crore for hospitality and allied sectors. It was good that the honourable Finance Minister mentioned the hospitality industry's distress in this context. This will bring a lot of relief and has been a key demand from us.

The proposed CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises) revamp shall help the micro sector, who could not avail ECLGS because they were not having existing credit outstanding, which was a basic requirement for availing ECLGS.

However, there is no direct intervention to support the highly stressed hospitality sector companies and their employees. No relief for

“

The industry needed a tax holiday for at least a year, along with temporary relief to comfort the cash flow crisis

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higher utility bills, wages support for employees and raw materials cost were announced.

The industry needed a tax holiday for at least a year, along with temporary relief to comfort the cash flow crisis which has affected the functionality of the industry. Exemption of tax collected at source (TCS) on outbound tours, restoration of input tax credit (ITC) on GST, reduction in indirect taxes and removal of service exports from India scheme (SEIS) benefit capping of Rs 5 crore were also expected.

Our long-term demand to give industry status to the hospitality sector also has been ignored year after year. Despite the fact that we are among the highest employment generators of the country and a valuable source of foreign exchange earnings, what we got is just a drop in the ocean of demands.

Mr Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI



“

The concept of cloud kitchen has proved to be a major lifeline for the F&B business during the pandemic

Before the global pandemic hit the world in 2020, at least 70 per cent of the restaurant's business was attributed to the dine-in segment, while about 30 per cent were deliveries. There were restaurants that relied wholly on the dine-in option, like restaurants in hotels, etc. However, the Coronavirus changed it all. Suddenly, that 70 per cent of the F&B business vanished, and restaurant owners had major business restructuring choices to make, or else close their business.

Thus, the concept of cloud kitchens, which were doing the rounds for the past few years, got widespread acceptance. The concept has proved to be a major lifeline for the F&B business worldwide in the last few years. Since they don't offer dine-in services, there is no need for them to invest in infrastructure and furniture. They have to pay minimal rentals and don't have to pay for astronomical utility bills.

However, it's not all hunky dory with cloud kitchens. With great advantages, these kitchens have some limitations too and that is why cloud kitchen businesses fail, such as too much dependence on delivery partners.

MYSTIC EAST

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Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India, 18A/1,
Everest, 18th Floor, 46C,
Chowringhee Road, Kolkata- 700 071;
Telephone- +91 33 2288-1742/43, 40035993.
E-mail: info@hraei.co.in
Website: www.hraei.co.in

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The infrastructure-lending status will allow for longer repayment tenure and lower borrowing rates

The industry has been clamouring for infrastructure status for over two decades. This year's Union Budget too brushed the demand aside

The hospitality sector's request for infrastructure lending status for the Indian hospitality sector, regardless of project cost, is a longstanding demand. The infrastructure-lending status will allow for longer repayment tenure and lower borrowing rates which will not only go a very long way in improving the health of the sector but also in attracting substantial fresh investments.

This will encourage hotel development, particularly in several off-beat leisure destinations and Tier 2 and 3 cities across the country, where growing travel demand is hampered by a lack of adequate good quality hotel supply. Creating a single-window approval system for all hospitality projects across the country, as well as providing guidelines to reduce the disparity in regulatory processes across states will also make hotel development in India easier.

The status will help some basic benefits, such as reduced electricity and water charges, lower property and development tax.

Finally, the infrastructure status will help bridge the gap between the tourism employment between the globe and India. It will also allow new players to step into the hotel industry and will ensure the long-term vision of the tourism industry becoming one of the major contributors to the economy and employment generation and the idea to improve on the inbound tourism ranking from 22nd in 2019 to top 10 in the next 10 years.

Mr Pranav Singh
Honourary Secretary



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Ministry of Tourism's Annual Report 2020-2021 details the fund allocation and actual disbursement on tourist spots of North East India

India To Resume Scheduled International Flights From March 27



AFTER a gap of two years, India lifted the ban on international flights. The overseas flights, suspended because of the coronavirus pandemic, will be available from March 27.

“After having recognized the increased vaccination coverage across the globe and in consultation with the stakeholders, the

Government of India has decided to resume scheduled commercial international passenger services to/ from India from 27.03.2022, i.e. start of Summer Schedule 2022,” read a statement from the Civil Aviation Ministry.

Air Bubble arrangements – which allow two countries to operate flights into each other’s territories subject

to certain conditions – also stands revoked, announced Civil Aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia. This arrangement hurt airlines’ operations and their profitability.

The international operations, said the aviation ministry, will have to adhere to the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare guidelines for international travel. (Source NDTV)

IHCL Partners With UNESCO To Preserve The Intangible Cultural Heritage Of India



INDIAN Hotels Company (IHCL), India's largest hospitality company, has announced that it will collaborate with UNESCO to help preserve and promote the intangible cultural heritage of India, as part of a major new initiative meant to transform the travel landscape in the post pandemic world.

Together, IHCL and UNESCO will offer experiential tours for travellers at various IHCL hotels, so that they can experience the living heritage of the country better. The first phase will include visits to local communities practicing art forms like Patachitra – a traditional scroll painting technique in West Bengal, Ganga Aarti – the prayer

ceremony at Dasashwamedh Ghat at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, as well as Kalbelia performances, blue pottery making, Bagru hand block printing, and the Terracota art of Molela. Visitors will also be able to experience the unique tribal life of the Bishnoi village in Rajasthan, and Mysuru Dasara and Janpadaloka in Karnataka.

Speaking on the occasion, Gaurav Pokhariyal, Senior Vice President & Global Head – Human Resources, IHCL, said, "Long been heralded as the custodians of Indian heritage, IHCL for over a century, has been providing sustainable platforms that preserve and promote local art and culture. We are delighted to partner with UNES-

CO in this industry-first collaboration to work towards preserving India's intangible cultural heritage. Leveraging our business strengths, value chains and partner networks, IHCL hotels will work towards a holistic plan to safeguard the living heritage of the country while empowering local communities."

Eric Falt, Director, UNESCO, New Delhi, said, "Together with IHCL, we want to showcase to Indians and foreigners alike, the diversity of India's living heritage. The objective is that when they visit an IHCL hotel, they are offered a chance to discover at least one cultural practice they have probably never witnessed before. Rather than bringing a dance troupe to their hotel, we will bring the visitors to the practitioners of that art form – in the midst of their community. They will see their pride, they will see their uniqueness, they will see the incredible diversity of intangible India."

The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted by 178 countries, emphasizes the importance of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) for ensuring cultural diversity. ICH represents the "living" heritage of a country and is made up of practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills, including instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

MoT invites comments from stakeholders on draft National Digital Tourism Mission

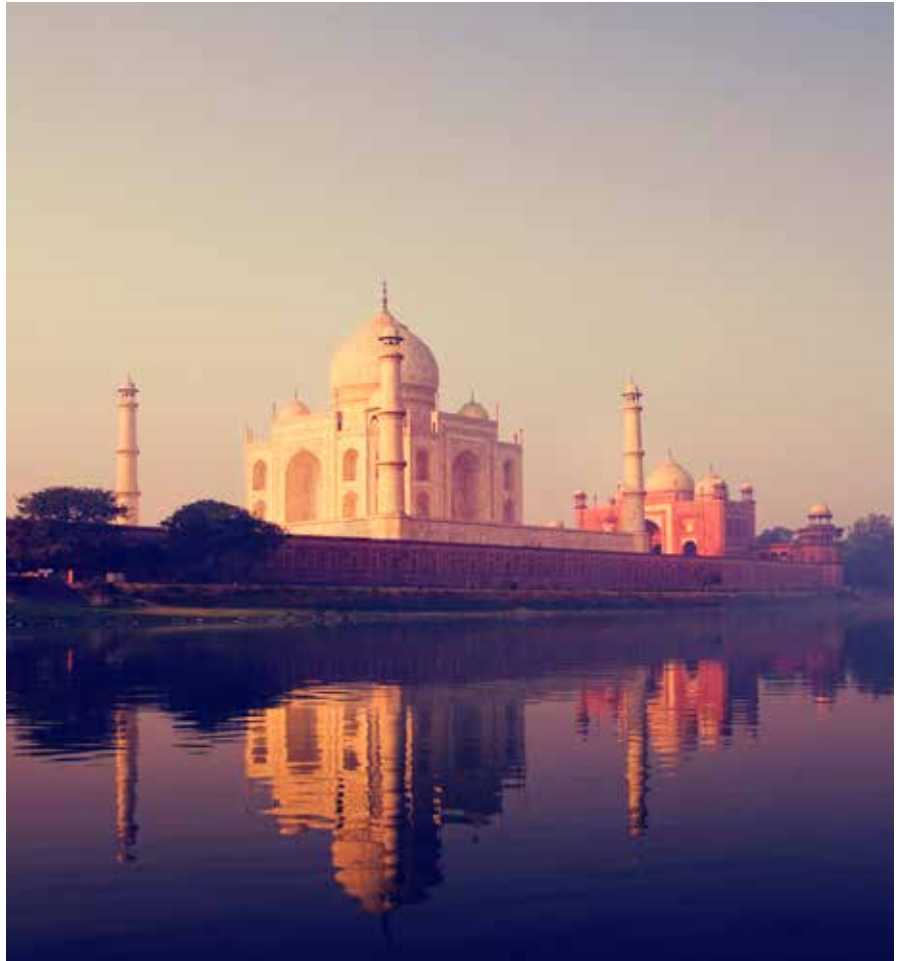
THE Union Ministry of Tourism has proposed setting up a National Digital Tourism Mission. In this regard, an inter-ministerial Task Force has been set-up to undertake consultations with the tourism industry and domain experts, define the context, mission, vision, objectives, and overall scope of the National Digital Tourism Mission.

The Task Force has prepared a draft report on proposed National Digital Tourism Mission, which inter-alia lays down domain and technology principles, standards, digital stack, governance structure and plan for implementation. The Ministry of Tourism has invited final comments from the stakeholders on draft report for setting up of National Digital Tourism Mission.

The vision of National Digital Tourism Mission is to bridge the existing information gap amongst different stakeholders of tourism ecosystem through a digital highway.

The National Digital Tourism Mission envisages achieving the objective of harnessing the full potential of digitisation in tourism sector by facilitating exchange of information and services in tourism sector spreading across national and state tourism organisations, tourism service providers, tourism destinations, products, experiences and tourists.

The draft takes note of the fact that tourism sector is highly fragmented. Subsectors of tourism such as transport, accommodation, restaurants



and catering, and personal services are all subject to very different challenges and opportunities.

It has also been noted that most of the tourism systems developed by the Centre, state governments, public and private sector function in silos. As a result, the tourism ecosystem is unable to harvest the combinatorial

benefits of information exchange. Data systems currently don't interact with each other using a common language, thereby curtailing data analytics and resultant policy-making. In order to overcome the same, there is need for seamless standardised data exchange amongst various stakeholders.

Bengal govt making efforts to improve tourism infrastructure in Sundarbans, Minister tells Assembly



THE government, with the engagement of the private sector, is planning to set up eco-friendly hotels and entertainment arenas around the mangrove forest.

The West Bengal government is making all efforts to improve the tourism infrastructure in the Sundarbans and has solicited the participation of the private sector in the matter, State

Tourism Minister, Indranil Sen, told the Assembly on Thursday. During the question hour, Sen, in his reply to a query, said the government, with the engagement of the private sector, is planning to set up eco friendly hotels and entertainment arenas around the mangrove forest.

The state, since the TMC's rise to power in 2011 has introduced some

package tours from the city to the Sunderbans using two tourism department vessels to ferry them to the jungles and back. Sen said that the

government was also weighing the possibilities of starting houseboat services in the next six months in several large waterbodies, much like the ones in Kashmir.

Courtesy: ET Travel World

Northeastern States Exhibit Business Potential At 'World Expo 2020' In Dubai



THE 8 northeastern states of India – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim have been displaying their investment potential during the 'Northeast Fortnight' organized by the India Pavilion at Expo 2022 Dubai.

This Northeast Fortnight was officially launched on March 6 in the

presence of numerous dignitaries from the State, Northeastern Council (NEC) and Ministry of Development of Northeast Region (DONER).

The visiting delegation incorporated of – Industry Minister of Assam – Chandramohan Patowari; Sikkim's Minister of Commerce, Industries, Tourism & Civil Aviation – Bedu Singh Panth; Mizoram's Minister of Tour-

ism and Sports – Robert Royte; and Advisor of Industries and Commerce of Nagaland – Imnatiba Jamir; and the Mission Director of Assam Skill Development Mission – Adil Khan.

This event aims to emphasize on the region's economic potential, highlight critical industries such as tourism & hospitality, promote the region's rich cultural history, including art and culture, as well as foods from these states.

Besides, the visiting delegation will hold multiple sessions targeted at highlighting success stories, reforms, and sectors of excellence in order to present the region as a developing section of the country. Startups from these 8 northeastern states will also present their tales of key success and innovations.

According to UAE News, few of the Northeast Fortnight's sessions and conferences incorporated the 'Conference on Business Opportunities in the Northeast,' held on March 7.

It stressed on identifying investment prospects across the 8 north-eastern states as well as state presentations, followed by conversation and deliberation. A session on Northeast Tourism Opportunities will be held on March 9, followed by a session on Skill Development on March 11.

Aside from commercial meetings, the India Pavilion will showcase a variety of cultural acts, including traditional music, dances, performances by well-known bands, fashion presentations emphasizing on the region's unique heritage, and film screenings.

Ambuja Neotia, IHCL tie up to manage hotel



AMBUJA Neotia group joined hands with Indian Hotels Co (IHCL) on Monday for managing Raa-jkutir, under SeleQtion hotel brand. Located at Swabhumi, the property was originally launched in 2018 by Ambuja Neotia Group.

“Kolkata is not only an important business centre but also the gateway to eastern India. With this project, we are happy to extend our hospitality

chain into eastern India,” said Rohit Khosla, executive vice-president of IHCL (north and eastern operations).

With over Rs 60 crore spent on the project in 2018 alone, Harsh Neotia, chairman of Ambuja Neotia Group, remains positive about the future of the project, despite the disruption caused by the pandemic. He also expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration with ICHL. “Kolkata

already has a number of Taj properties, with more initiatives on the way. Although the Covid 19 restrictions were a rude shock to our development and expansion plans, I am optimistic about the future of this partnership,” he said.

With the addition of this hotel, IHCL has four operational hotels in Kolkata and two more under development.

DREAMS AND ILLUSIONS

The industry has been clamouring for infrastructure status for over two decades. This year's Union Budget too brushed the demand aside



▶ A quality hotel asset is highly capital intensive in nature

THE hospitality sector's request for infrastructure lending status for the Indian hospitality sector, regardless of project cost, is a longstanding demand. The infrastructure-lending status will allow for longer repayment tenure and lower borrowing rates which will not

only go a very long way in improving the health of the sector but also in attracting substantial fresh investments. This will encourage hotel development, particularly in several off-beat leisure destinations and Tier 2 and 3 cities across the country, where growing travel demand

is hampered by a lack of adequate good quality hotel supply. Creating a single-window approval system for all hospitality projects across the country, as well as providing guidelines to reduce the disparity in regulatory processes across states will also make hotel development in India easier.



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In the year 2012, the Congress-led UPA government had given the status to three-star or higher category hotels outside cities with a population of over one million. But, only 3-4 percent of hotels—with an investment of Rs 200 crores or more (excluding land costs) — belong to this category. Also, convention centres with an investment of Rs 300 crores qualify for the status. Majority of hotels in the country belong to the budget segment with investment around Rs 10-20 crores. Hardly 10-15 per cent will pass muster under this policy. The government must bring this level drastically down to benefit the majority of hotels.

Conferring industry status to the sector will help hospitality establishments to take advantage of certain benefits such as reduced electricity and water charges, lower property and development tax, among other things. This will help in reducing operating costs for hospitality players, as industrial tariffs are substantially lower than the commercial tariffs that these companies currently pay.

The Indian hotel industry is largely driven by the unorganized sector with only 160,000 branded rooms of around 1 million hotel rooms available in the country. The low share of branded supply in the country is primarily due to the unavailability of quality supply in the country. A quality hotel asset is highly capital intensive in nature with a development cycle of 3-5 years for the entire asset to complete construction including all the approvals and licenses. Post the commencement of operations, it generally takes 2-3 years for an asset to stabilize and the credit period allowed to an asset is usually 8-10 years which includes a buffer period of 2 years before the actual repay-



BIG BENEFITS

- Help entrepreneurs who wish to enter the hotel industry seek funding at a lower rate of interest and longer tenure of 15-20 years
- Benefit majority of hotels in the country, belonging to the budget segment, with investment around Rs 10-20 crores
- Lead to faster development of 38 UNESCO sites and the creation of new tourism belts within the country.
- Help get benefits, such as reduced electricity and water charges, lower property and development tax
- Help bridge the gap between the tourism employment between the globe and India

ment of the principal amount begins. Irrespective of stabilization, the repayment of principal has to start after 2 years to ensure repayment within the specified tenure.

Due to the short credit tenure for the asset, the owner is forced to put in at least 50-50% of equity and with the short payback period, the majority of income during the first 10 years of the life of the asset is used to off-load the debt burden making the return on equity negligible. Low returns on equity on the hotel assets are largely discouraging the entrepreneurs to enter the hotel industry.

In the western developed countries like the US, the borrowers have the freedom to invest between 10-20% equity and the remaining through

external agencies to support the development. It is due to this reason that countries like the US, China, UK, etc. have a dominance of branded supply in the market.

Every year the industry appeals before the Union Budget of the central government to provide infrastructure status to the hotel industry. Infrastructure status will help entrepreneurs who wish to enter the hotel industry seek funding at a lower rate of interest and longer tenure of 15-20 years allowing them to lower the share of equity and enjoy enhanced returns.

More hotel supply not only helps cater the tourism demand but also uplifts the economy of the state as well as the country and creates employment opportunities. As per WTTC, every 1 in 4 jobs created in the world are in the tourism sector, but in India, the hospitality sector employs only 10% of the workforce making it 1 in 10 jobs.

The infrastructure status will help bridge the gap between the tourism employment between the globe and India.

Infrastructure status will allow new players to enter the hotel industry and will ensure the long-term vision of the tourism industry becoming one of the major contributors to the economy and employment generation and the idea to improve on the inbound tourism ranking from 22nd in 2019 to top 10 in the next 10 years.

In India, there are 38 identified UNESCO heritage sites that are under-utilized due to the unavailability of infrastructure and higher cash requirements to uplift those sites.

Infrastructure status to the industry will lead to faster development of these sites and the creation of new tourism belts within the country.



Business is pursuing digital transformation

GM INTERVIEW

Gaurav Soneja who has recently taken over as General Manager, ITC Royal Bengal moves to Kolkata from ITC Gardenia, Bengaluru. Gaurav's journey with ITC Hotels began with Welcomhotel Sheraton New Delhi in 2007 and since then he has held senior management positions at several ITC Hotels in Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai setting definite and impec-

cable examples for his successors.

An integral part of the pre-opening team as the Cluster Hotel Manager of ITC Royal Bengal & ITC Sonar, Kolkata, he was one of the leaders for positioning and launching of the 693 Keys one-of-a-kind destination with 15 food and beverage offerings, Bengal Stateroom, the largest pillar less Hall in Eastern India, meeting rooms, spa

and long stay residences. Thus, developing strategy amidst stiff competition and leading the way for one of the largest hotel complexes in India which has been the talk of the industry. High quality and precision-driven, Gaurav's contemporary management style combined with deft operational skills came to be much appreciated.

An alumnus of IHM Bangalore,

Gaurav brings with him management expertise garnered through international exposure as Restaurant Manager at Emirates Palace – Abu Dhabi and Ishtar Palace – Jordan. In 2009, he moved to ITC Gardenia, Bengaluru as Beverage Manager during the pre-opening phase and played an instrumental role in setting up the beverage portfolio of the hotel. He then moved on to ITC Windsor, Bengaluru, ITC Grand Central, Mumbai and ITC Sonar, Kolkata in the role of Food & Beverage Manager.

Subsequently, Gaurav rose to become the Resident Manager at ITC Sonar, Kolkata where he was elevated to the position of Cluster Hotel Manager for both ITC Sonar and ITC Royal Bengal, Kolkata. In 2018, after the successful Opening of ITC Royal Bengal, Kolkata, he moved to ITC Hotels flagship - ITC Maurya, New Delhi as Hotel Manager. In this role, he was responsible for the overall operations of the hotel. Gaurav returned to ITC Gardenia as the General Manager in November 2021.

An avid Golfer, Gaurav is a core believer in teamwork, he is passionate about Food & Beverage and loves spending time with his daughter and family. He is a proud parent of two dogs- Whisky and Topsy.

Driven by creativity and quality of new inspirational up market trends, his endeavour has always been to cultivate and maintain the finest hotel operation and to develop and maintain strong relationships with guests.

He interacted with Mystic East in an exclusive interview. Excerpts:

The pandemic has battered the hotel industry. How do you see it evolving to meet the challenge?

This is the biggest global economic as well as health emergency in recent times and the impact on travel and

hotel industry is unprecedented. Organisations developed rigorous contingency plans to limit its impact on employees, guests and communities. This required extensive strategizing of existing business continuity plans.

Our ethos of Responsible Luxury, translates into a unique service culture where associates intuitively create moments of delight for every guest. Since the onset of the pandemic, our topmost concern continues to be the safety, security and well-being of our associates as well as prepare to expedite a return to normal once this crisis passes.

How has your hotel coped with the crisis?

ITC Royal Bengal is committed towards delivering world-class luxury experiences that address the most critical needs of wellbeing and safety through responsible practices. Our DNV Platinum Certified initiative 'We-Assure' is a unique programme designed in collaboration with medical professionals and disinfection experts to further enhance the existing hygiene and sanitization protocols. Having instituted new health and safety measures as a part of the

ever-evolving operating procedures, we are ceaselessly ensuring the well-being of our guests and employees. Through these endeavours, we have enabled our discerning guests to have a continued experience of their favourite stay & dining destination within a safe haven.

Did you try any innovative ideas? What ancillary revenue stream did you tap?

Guests are indulging in safe staycations. As the name denotes, people from within the city are checking into the hotel for a break. Also, travellers from different cities in India, largely cities close to Kolkata that are 'car friendly distances' are checking in. Pre Covid times too, the staycations have been popular, at ITC Royal Bengal. Residents may want to take a break away from their homes to a brand and location they trust. Guests tend to make their selection on the basis of hotels meeting the highest standards of safety and hygiene.

With the changing environment, guests have taken a strong liking for our home delivery menus – Gourmet Couch & Flavours – serving the best from the Kitchens of ITC Hotels.



Crafted with care and handled with utmost hygiene to ensure wellbeing, the mindfully curated menus ensure unique food experiences with local love using fresh seasonal and local ingredients. This will continue to grow with new offerings and exciting menus.

During this time, we also opened the Sleep Boutique at ITC Royal Bengal. A wellness initiative, it's a result of a research of more than a decade to implement practices that enhance the quality of sleep experienced by guests at our hotels. The offerings at ITC Hotels Sleep Boutique located at ITC Royal Bengal allows the guest to feel their best. One can choose from the diverse range of pillows, bedding and bed linen part of the signature SLEEEP Boutique collection for their personal use.

Now that hotels and restaurants are opening up, can you see any green shoots of revival?

Domestic leisure travel is on the rise

with subsiding cases of infections and increasing vaccinations. Easing of travel restrictions, pick-up in leisure travel and onset of wedding season will boost occupancy and average room rates. With State governments rolling back restrictions pertaining to travel, there has been a stronger bounce back of business.

The business is pursuing digital transformation. Recently, ITC Hotels App has been launched allowing guests easy access to room and F&B reservations, its cuisine delivery offers, as well as loyalty membership management, all through one App.

Responding speedily to the challenges and disruptions arising out of the pandemic, we had launched a host of curated offerings for in-home dining which are now immensely popular.

Are you expecting more MICE customers in the coming days? Have the bookings of postponed weddings begun?

There is a growing demand in the MICE segment, which is expected to make a come-back. In the wedding segment we are witnessing a healthy demand pipeline build up already.

ITC Royal Bengal offers the largest venues in a luxury hotel in Eastern India, with a sprawling 16400 sq feet pillar less magnificent Bengal State-room, to exquisite arrival lobbies and huge lawns ideal for Kolkata socials. It offers versatile banquet options for both the business meetings and events with total banquet and convention facilities covering an area of 61000 sq feet. The luxury of space provides us with an opportunity to plan large events following all necessary safety guidelines.

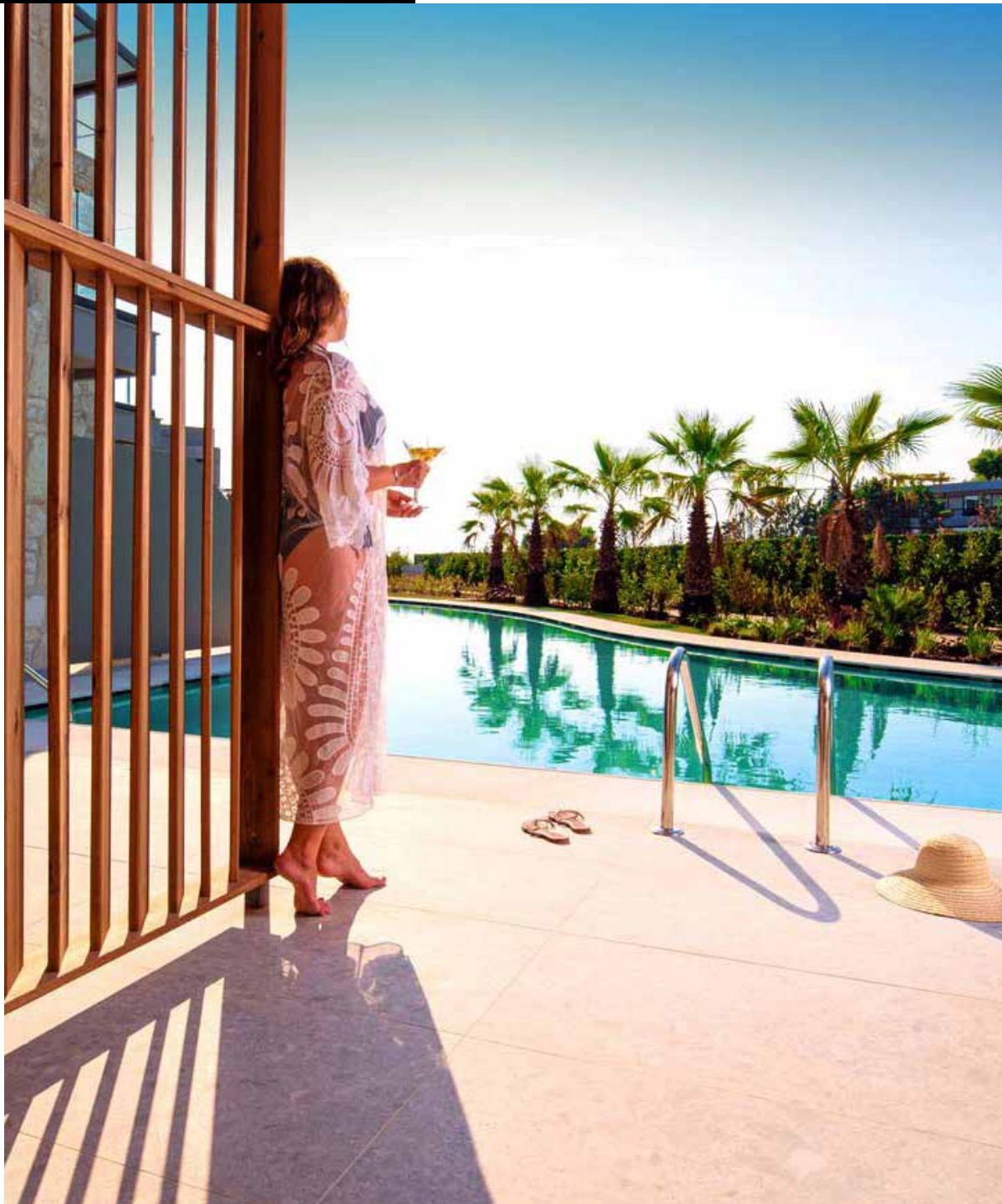
The Hotel also offers an exclusive entry and exit for guests, ample hassle-free parking space for more than 650 cars and much more, for an unforgettable experience.

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COVER STORY

VISION 2022

The future of the hospitality industry looks bright in the long run, despite temporary setbacks

THE year 2022 is going to be critical for the Indian hospitality sector as the uphill journey towards the end of the long road to post-COVID recovery seems never ending. The industry is waiting patiently for a bounce back in domestic leisure demand to continue, as people have embraced the new 'normal' of travel in the COVID-world, even if Omicron or other variants or sub-variants that may emerge from time-to-time to act as temporary setbacks in the sector's recovery. In short, we have learnt to live with the virus, come what may.

No wonder that the hospitality industry — one of the most resilient sectors — has also learned to adapt quickly, think outside the box and embrace new ideas faster than before. We have braced ourselves

from the few upsides of the instability caused by the pandemic in the last two years. Now we expect hotel occupancy to reach pre-pandemic levels in 2022 across India, with average rates approaching pre-pandemic levels towards the end of the year.

As the sector continues to bounce back in 2022 and beyond, here are 10 trends we expect to pick up steam in the year ahead.

1. Tapping the unexplored leisure segment:

Most hotel companies have started expanding their footprints in offbeat leisure destinations as leisure travel bounces back faster than business travel during a crisis. We expect this trend to gain momentum in the coming years, as the domestic leisure segment continues to be underserved, with several emerging tourist places in India still lagging adequate infrastructure, including

good quality branded accommodation. Taj Chia Kutir, is a good example in the sector as the reputed Taj group tied up with Neotia group to launch a boutique hotel at Kalimpong, near Darjeeling. The Odisha government took the initiative to introduce the concept of glamping, or glamorous camping, in several offbeat places of the state like Daringbari and Hirakud. The central government has planned major investments in the country's road and rail networks, along with plans to privatize airports in Tier 2 & 3 cities, which will help improve the regional and last-mile connectivity to several emerging tourist places and encourage hoteliers to tap further into this underserved segment.

2. Corporate travel, back on track:

Domestic corporate travel is slowly attracting customers, as in-person meetings are finally making a come-

back after several months of virtual meetings and video conferencing. Corporate travel is already accounting for 20-25% of hotel revenue in certain cases, which is a positive sign for the sector. Demand from sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, pharma, FMCG, consumer durables, and financial services, is witnessing a considerable recovery, but demand from IT & ITES is regaining at a slower pace. Sales personnel of corporate companies have resumed visits to tier-2 and tier-3 cities. While the increasing travel restrictions due to Omicron may prompt companies to focus on critical and crucial travel in the short term, we expect the situation to stabilize and domestic corporate travel to pick up significantly in the coming year.

3. New streams of ancillary revenue: The hotel sector has generally trailed behind other travel-related industries when it comes to tapping ancillary revenue streams by focusing mainly on a few additional services such as F&B and spas. However, when room revenue plummeted during the pandemic, the hotel sector was forced to find new ways to utilize their assets, in the process creating a slew of ancillary revenue streams such as food delivery, laundry services, and DIY meals to name a few. Having realized the true potential of ancillary revenues in increasing the top line, hoteliers should now take advantage of the vast untapped opportunity by utilizing existing infrastructure for newer business opportunities. This could include having a dedicated area for co-working spaces, monetizing car parking spaces, deploying electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, leasing kitchens for cloud kitchen requirements during non-peak hours, and other similar space and service optimization.

This strategy will enhance customer engagement and brand loyalty while increasing real estate revenue per square foot.

4. Smart tech to change the basic hotel design: After adopting digital keys and menus during the pandemic, several hotel companies are now evaluating other technological aspects to revamp their properties to remain relevant in today's fast-changing world. Smart tech is poised to play a greater role in future hotels, as it gives hoteliers endless possibilities to differentiate themselves from the competition and exceed the expectations of the guests of tomorrow. It will also help in reducing costs, streamlining processes, optimizing operational efficiency, and enhancing staff productivity, all of which will help in improving the sector's profitability. However, as hotels start handling and storing vast amounts of guest data, the sector will be faced with a new set of challenges. Customer privacy, data security, and cybersecurity will become critical considerations as the sector becomes increasingly data-driven in the future. Beijing Winter Olympics demonstrated how spread of the Covid-19 can be restricted by the deployment of automated cooks and servers at the canteen. Room service and facility management was also handled by smart robots. On the one hand, use of such automated technology looks sophisticated, but also raises the possibility of making humans redundant in the long run.

5. Cutting down the flab in operations: We expect hotels to continue to function with lower staff ratios, albeit we can already see the temptation to revert to the previous ratios and labour strength, particularly in the economy segment, where ratios

are already lower. However, hoteliers have discovered that the prior staffing ratio may not be necessary for efficient operation and will work to attain the best ratio for their property in the future, focusing on revising SOPs to account for the lower staffing ratio, as well as employee reskilling and training, to ensure that service quality does not suffer. However, in a country like India cutting down labour may not be possible. A better option will be to rationalise staff strength and also build a long line of temporary workers who can be summoned to handle huge pressure during the peak sessions.

6. Third-party management will be prevalent: Franchising is slowly but steadily becoming attractive in the Indian hotel sector, as it provides owners the flexibility to run their own properties. Making the franchise or base fee equally appealing in both management and franchising agreements, as well as allowing flexibility in the franchise period with shorter durations of 8-10 years, can help to promote franchising in the country. As franchising gains more prominence, we expect the role of a third-party manager, which has traditionally been underplayed in India, to become more important, as both hotel owners and operators realize the true benefits and potential of working with professional asset managers to review and improve their hotel performance, especially in the post-COVID era. Moreover, as the Indian hotel sector evolves, an increasing number of hotels will be owned by institutional investors, making ROI crucial; third-party management is likely to gain significant traction in this scenario. This also opens up new avenues for start-ups and entrepreneurship among the

young and unemployed youth.

7. Lease pacts with branded restaurants:

Hoteliers should reimagine F&B by leasing spaces to standalone marquee restaurant brands on a revenue-share model, which can be beneficial for both parties. Restaurant operators can benefit from the hotel's captive clientele, location benefits, and brand image, while hotels get an opportunity to elevate the customer experience by becoming a 'destination' for both hotel guests and locals, resulting in higher F&B revenues and profitability. Many quick service restaurants (QSRs) are already thriving following the model. Big brands lend their design, consultancy while the operators follow the tried and tested models to survive and thrive.

8. Moving ahead towards branded residences:

Branded residences, which are still a niche idea in India, is another opportunity that hospitality

players should seriously consider in the post-COVID era to diversify their risks and revenue streams. By leveraging its brand through affiliation, the hotel operator can not only receive royalty/licensing fees, but also diversify income streams by providing end-to-end property management and a full range of services such as concierge services, housekeeping, laundry, maintenance, and F&B services. This is a lucrative model as hotel operators get to leverage their brand equity towards premium housing projects and earn not only from the royalty licensing and services provided but also from the commission earned from the sale of each home.

9. Joining popular space of alternative accommodation:

Traveller preferences have changed considerably since the onset of the pandemic, resulting in a growing preference for vacation home rentals and homestays as alternatives to hotels and resorts

among many domestic travelers. These segments provide travelers the best of both worlds – privacy, security, flexibility, and convenience of a private lodging combined with the pleasures and comfort of a hotel, especially for those traveling in small groups or with families and pets. However, these segments are still highly unorganized with the presence of very few branded hospitality players, especially in the upscale and luxury segments. As a result, new players are likely to enter these segments with lucrative investment models, particularly for expansion in underserved leisure destinations, due to lower overhead costs and higher profitability than a hotel. IHCL, for instance, has introduced the brand amā Stays & Trails to foray into the country's fast-growing homestays market. Similarly, leading international hotel companies have already diversified into the vacation rental space globally and it is only a matter of time



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before they do so in India as well

10. Real world of sustainability: In the Climate Conference of Glasgow this year, India pledged to become carbon-neutral by 2070, a goal that will need unprecedented collaboration across industries, including tourism & hospitality, which are not only victims of the climate crisis, but also major emitters and contributors to global warming. As the sector continues its recovery from the COVID crisis, it has an opportunity to step up climate action to move toward a greener, more sustainable future. The government and the private sector should make a determined effort to put all necessary measures in place to turn climate-change-related ambitions into reality since lip service is no

longer enough. If central and state governments offer adequate incentives, hospitality players will surely co-operate to make sustainability a reality, not just a lip service.

GLOBAL TRENDS

1. Bleisure travelers & hotel work spaces: This means that hospitality venues in leisure destinations will have make-shift offices for bleisure travelers, as well as locals seeking a change of work environment. This is a great opportunity for hotels and F&B venues to capitalize on the trend and get ready with ample plug sockets, free high-speed WIFI and great coffee service.

2. Holistic hospitality, health & well-being: Covid pandemic has rolled bleisure and wellness into a

neat package. Stressed homesick customers look for beauty, relaxation spa, health diagnostic technology, stress management all rolled into one.

3. Digitalized guest experiences: The trend towards digital and contactless services has gained new momentum since 2020. Mobile check-in, contactless payments, voice control and biometrics will be the usual services.

4. Personalization: Tools such as Mailchimp and Zoho have made personalized e-mail marketing accessible to the masses, ensuring highly target audience-specific communications. Tapping big data to create one-to-one interactions between the guest and the host, AI-powered chatbots are going to be customer service assets.

Covid pandemic has rolled bleisure and wellness into a neat package. Stressed homesick customers look for beauty, relaxation spa, health diagnostic technology, stress management all rolled into one



5. Experience economy & essentialism: The rise of the independent traveler is the new normal. Unique experiences that give back to local communities in meaningful ways are in demand, as are niche properties, adventurous holidays and relaxation retreats.

6. Asset management strategy: The asset-light approach has become prevalent in the industry. The separation between the management of operations and real-estate assets now allows hospitality companies to focus on their core business, thus improving efficiencies.

7. Solo travel: In the age of mindfulness, many have embraced the meditative value of spending time

alone and venturing out into the big wide world unencumbered, interacting and making friends to whatever degree suits.

8. Sustainability: Avoiding disposable plastics, eliminating unnecessary paper consumption thanks to opt-in receipts and reducing food waste, simple eco-friendly switches include replacing miniature toiletries with larger, locally sourced dispensers, choosing ethically produced bed-sheets made from organic materials and reducing energy consumption with smart bulbs, vegetarian and vegan options are trends

9. Virtual & augmented reality: Videos providing 360-degree views of restaurant ambiance, café terrac-

es enveloped in greenery or hotel beachfront locations, for instance, are just the ticket to make an establishment stand out this year. Augmented reality uses graphical or informational overlays to enhance in-situ environments.

10. Traveling less (& Staycations): Travel restrictions in 2020 and 2021 have facilitated the rise of the staycation. Even with international travel opening back up, between airline price hikes, Covid testing requirements and the complicated bureaucracy involved in going abroad now, many deem foreign travel either too expensive for a big family vacation or not worth the hassle for the weekend breaks of the past.

FUTURE TENSE

The growth of the Cloud Kitchen market during the pandemic has been phenomenal. But will the growth sustain when restaurants open and people start eating out in hordes?



THE Covid-19 pandemic hit several sectors of industry, but none was hit as hard as the hotels and restaurants. Many cafes, restaurants, and bars had to shut shop as they failed to survive the second wave of COVID-19. But as we moved further, almost every industry learned to cope with the

pandemic, and living with the virus became the new normal.

But, as the industry is also one of the most resilient sectors, it came up with new ideas to deal with the losses incurred over the last two years during the lockdowns. The concept of “Cloud Kitchen” was brought into the fore as a potent

weapon to deal with the crisis brought about by the pandemic.

What's it

It is a kitchen as a service model also known as the ghost kitchen. Working completely or 100% on the delivery model, these are kitchens where different restaurants

share space to make their food and service customers through deliveries. There are no ostentatious or glamorous premises with no foot traffic – a simple hygienic space with multiple preparation counters located in the parking, or any cheaper location that suffices as a kitchen. In most cases, the said space is shared by multiple owners to service their customers who use a food aggregator app to order food. The kitchen space, the infrastructure and equipment like the gas and cooking counters, and utilities for seamless operations are shared.

The concept has been there for quite some time now; however, it got newer wings during the pandemic as there was a shift in demand from the traditional in-dining options to home delivered food. Take the example of GRAB, a food delivery app from Singapore that started serving Indonesia in 2018 and stretched its operations to Thailand and Vietnam by 2019. The app became so popular even before Covid-19 that the app soon covered most south-east Asia countries. Multiple restaurants make their food in one place per the business model with a delivery partner onboard to deliver the orders. Similarly, US cloud kitchen major C3 announced amidst the pandemic that it was ready to recruit at least 1000 new staff members to strengthen its 138-cloud kitchen network. When the company started operations, it intended to start with about 85 kitchens. Organizational and financial restructuring has become the crux of the situation for very many business owners and operators in the F&B business today – and the pandemic has shown the way.

Cloud kitchens have also witnessed astronomical growth in India. In India, they have delivery or tie-up with food ordering portals like Swiggy, Zomato, Uber Eats, etc.

With lower upfront costs, business owners have greater flexibility to experiment with their menu and services. No doubt, the cloud kitchen model is one of the fastest growing F&B segments

No Dine-In

Before the global pandemic hit the world in 2020, at least 70% of the restaurant's business was attributed to the dine-in segment, while about 30% were deliveries. There were restaurants that relied wholly on the dine-in option, like restaurants in hotels, etc. However, the Coronavirus changed it all. Suddenly, that 70% of the F&B business vanished, and restaurant owners had major business restructuring choices to make, or else close their business.

Thus, the concept of cloud kitchens, which were doing the rounds for the past few years, got widespread acceptance. The concept has proved to be a major lifeline for the F&B business worldwide in the last year. Since they don't offer dine-in services, there is no need for them to invest in infrastructure and furniture. They have to pay minimal rentals and don't have to pay for astronomical utility bills.

According to a report by RedSeer Management Consulting, cloud kitchens are set to be a \$2 billion industry in India by 2024, up from \$400 million in 2019. Not just that, the market size of cloud kitchens is expected

to reach \$1.05 billion by 2023. Food aggregators are aggressively investing in cloud kitchens to cash in on the frenzy.

RAPID GROWTH: THE UPSIDE

There are several factors that help fuel rapid growth of cloud kitchens. They have seen funding pouring in from several investors in the country in recent times.

- **Low operational costs:** One of the prominent benefits of a cloud kitchen compared to a conventional restaurant is the lower barrier to entry and lower ongoing costs. It is simple to understand this one – with no brick-and-mortar presence; cloud kitchens are a financially viable business model compared to traditional restaurant businesses. Opening up a brick-and-mortar restaurant entails high costs, while the cloud kitchen involves substantially less investment. The typical costs that are minimized in the KaaS model are:
 - **Rental costs:** Infrastructural costs; as the kitchen in the cloud model can be modified anytime to optimize space. Restaurant businesses that work in the cloud kitchen are reportedly able to earn better because their costs are low. The risks of this model of business are also considerably lower. The initial investment is comparatively way lower than restaurants in the physical world. With lower upfront costs, business owners have greater flexibility to experiment with their menu and services. No doubt, the cloud kitchen model is one of the fastest growing F&B segments.
 - **Alternative during the pandemic:** One of the primary reasons contributing to the growth of cloud kitchens was the pandemic's health and safety factor. Due to lockdown,



► For restaurants, delivery forms a part of their revenue, but for cloud kitchens, delivery is the only revenue channel

most restaurants had to close shops resulting in losses to businesses. With social distancing, most physical restaurants could not take in customers as before. Therefore, organizational restructuring was important for most businesses.

One of the smartest options was to switch to a cloud kitchen business model. It involved lesser costs, and with enhanced flexibility, restaurant owners could switch to this model faster and cost-effectively than conventional restaurants. This aspect will give a boost to self-employment, especially to women. As it doesn't require much investment, such kitchens have the potential to fulfill the dream of young chefs who want to own their eateries.

• **Safety of customers:** Covid-19 is contagious; that is the reason why the virus spread exponentially around the world. Under the circumstances, customers had to stay back home with social distancing as one of the most effective tools to fight the virus. Brick-and-mortar restaurants meant higher risks of spreading the virus. On the other hand,

Cloud kitchens meant enhanced safety, ensuring that the customer's health is well-protected. Thus, it meant that restaurant businesses in the UAE can go in for major business restructuring.

• **Enhanced customer services:** Cloud kitchens facilitate faster services as there is a well-defined model of work. Customers place orders via food aggregator apps, the respective cloud kitchen prepares the food, and there is a separate delivery network that delivers the food to the customer. It is popularly known as distributed cooking. So, restaurants can focus on their part of preparing food while delivery networks do their job. All this makes the model effective. The prices that customers pay are nominal as cloud kitchens are cost-effective. Overall, the kitchens can make good profits in the UAE while customers also need to pay less for good and guaranteed food quality. Customers can order food fast and seamlessly using third-party apps. Today more and more people use these apps to order food because of the overall benefits.

• **Multiple segments, flexibility and technology:** Cloud kitchens enable one to target multiple segments of the market simultaneously. It has the potential to run multiple brands out of the same kitchen and to serve different demographics at the same time while benefiting from economies of scale across brands. Cloud kitchens allow flexibility. One can keep track of what is working and what's not, and then re-evaluate the menu.

• The success of cloud kitchens is technology-driven as they need a quicker and better return on investment (ROI). Technology enables cloud kitchen operators to know more about their customers' likes and dislikes and then they can alter menus accordingly. Customer satisfaction is critical for long-term success and technology has made that possible for cloud kitchens. Online ordering and food delivery apps are everything today because of the convenience they provide to customers and this will make the future of cloud kitchens more robust.

• One question that arises is that do

cloud kitchens, which came up as an aftermath of the pandemic, have a future or not? The answer is both yes, and no. Some focus on the advantages and predict a bright future, but there are downsides too. Let's try to understand these factors.

LACK OF TRUST: THE DOWNSIDE

It's not all hunky dory with cloud kitchens. With great advantages, these kitchens have some limitations too and that is why cloud kitchen businesses fail, such as too much dependence on delivery partners.

- **Low-Profit Margin & High Competition:** Cloud-kitchen owners indeed save up on infrastructure cost and service staff's salary. But you have to pay an aggregator tax – the commissions that Swiggy and Zomato charge to operate on their platforms, ranging between 20-30% of revenue before factoring in discounts. For restaurants, delivery forms a part of their revenue, but for cloud kitchens, delivery is the only revenue channel. So, what you end up saving on salary and infrastructure, you could end up paying more just to operate on these platforms. But if you wish to recruit delivery staff dedicated to your outlet, the price will go up substantially.
- **Trust Deficit:** Cloud Kitchens face a disadvantage by missing out on the organic local brand awareness created by a frontage. The top-of-mind recall only happens when you see the brand again and again, which is not possible for cloud kitchens. Also, since there is no dine-in, customers do not have memorable experiences to talk about, severely restricting the most reliable marketing channel for local businesses – word of mouth.
- **Multiple Brands, Multiple Problems:** Every cloud kitchen has a similar expansion strategy – introduce

a new food category or cuisine, and preferably under a new brand name so that it doesn't steal the light or tarnish the image of your established brand. Plus, another brand means more real estate on the aggregator screen, which should lead to more orders. While this move looks good on paper, the onus of preparing multiple cuisines falls on that one chef, who might not be equipped enough to deal with different cuisines or types of food. And when one brand takes the limelight, the other brands don't generate enough volume to justify the added inventory costs.

- **Hygiene and Staff:** Cloud Kitchens have more often than not found themselves on the wrong side of the basic restaurant parameters – hygiene & staff's working conditions. Customers' primary reservations before they order from any dark kitchen are, "Would it be safe?" "Have you been at their premises?" "Are you certain their place is hygienic?" People get these apprehensions because there have been many busts showing the true picture of a lot of cloud kitchens. Since there isn't an inflow of demanding customers, there is no need for operators to maintain the premises often leading to significant neglect in hygiene and upkeep. Even from the standpoint of chefs, these kitchens are often small and lack proper ventilation, leading to difficult working conditions.
- **Lack of Pricing Power:** While it is cheaper to set up a cloud kitchen, cheap cuts both ways. Customers are not really ready to pay the same price as a restaurant without the ambience and experience to support it. And customers who order frequently from cloud kitchens are looking for deals – hardly a type of customer that can bring in sustainable, profitable revenue. Hence, cloud kitchens

don't have pricing power and need to keep prices low and run deals constantly to attract new customers.

- **No Feedback Loop:** Unless you are actively involved in checking the reviews on the online aggregator platforms, there is no other way to see what your customers have to say about your food. Unlike in traditional dine-in restaurants, where a customer can directly speak to the server or manager or owner and convey their views, this is not possible for Cloud Kitchens. This lack of customer interaction can create a rift between what you think to be true and how your customers perceive your food – in turn leading to lower ratings and lesser orders. A vicious cycle indeed!
 - **Monitor inventory:** In a normal restaurant, food costs form a smaller part of the overall costs compared to cloud kitchens. Plus, as an owner, you are well aware of what's happening in your restaurant. As cloud-kitchen owners don't visit their establishments as frequently, inventory wastage and pilferage are much larger problems due to oversight. Hence it becomes even more important to monitor inventory levels to keep a check on increasingly tight margins.
 - **Missing fine-dining experience:** The experience of fine dining can only be felt inside a well-furnished restaurant. It's not just about eating, but meeting and mingling with friends, relatives, acquaintances or colleagues. You often make business deals after a fine lunch or dinner. Service of staff in a restaurant helps you earn a rich experience. You also miss some beautiful cutlery or a well-curated ambience that goes on to make lasting impression in your memory.
- So, if you have been planning to open just a cloud kitchen, without a real restaurant keep these factors in mind.



WE INNOVATED SEVERAL CONCEPTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

VIKAS SINGH had been appointed as Executive Chef for Hyatt Regency Kolkata in October 2019 and is responsible for overseeing the entire F&B production operation. With over 13 years of culinary experience, he brings a dynamic and innovative energy to Hyatt Regency Kolkata's diverse culinary scene.

His wide-ranging experience, creative flair and ardent passion for the culinary art make him the perfect chef to oversee and maintain the legacy of the award-winning restaurants of the Hyatt Regency Kolkata.

Holding a strong record of streamlining operations and improving service while preserving highest levels of quality, menu engineering and food styling is his prime forte. He is passionate towards blending the

contemporary eating habits with the authenticity of traditional flavours.

His passion to continuously learn and explore his craft has resulted in an impressive career spanning with previous work experiences that include working for 5-star hotels like Four Seasons, Marriott International, Accor Hotels as well as resort property Club Mahindra Resorts. Honoured to have worked with several Michelin Stars and Celebrity Chefs like Chef Gary Mehigan, Chef Jason Tan, Chef Kirk Westaway and Chef Mike Bagale during his culinary tenure in various hotels.

This maverick chef who has worked across India's major metro cities has cooked and served celebrities like, Amitabh Bachchan, MS Dhoni, Sachin Tendulkar and likes. The chef draws

his inspiration for cooking from his father, who is an ex-army officer. Since childhood he was fascinated with cooking technique and passion of his father to cook the delicious mutton curry. When not in action in his kitchen aisle, Chef loves to sing, play guitar and travel places to explore the new cuisines while developing his skills on shutterbug.

How has the pandemic changed the working dynamics in a hotel's kitchen?

Working dynamics is more or less same as before. At Hyatt Regency Kolkata we always measure the food safety and hygiene level as a priority. The new dynamics working is more focus on the safety of our team and guests. Every day we check tempera-

ture, oxygen level and other parameters of our team members. There is also briefing on the basic equipment like mask, gloves and PPE.

Did the periods of lockdown shattered a chef's confidence? What did you do when you were locked at home?

As a profession it's a very skilled and creative job. When you are skilled the confidence gets you to try and innovate new things. During lockdown, we were working on more creatively to reach out to our guests stuck at home. We tapped various delivery food options and offered them Do-It-Yourself (DIY) kits where they can work on recipes shared by us.

Mention what's your favourite cuisine and the go-to dish. Can you please share pictures to go along with the recipe.

In over my 14 plus years of culinary journey, I have gone through with various cuisines and food skills. But my personal favourite is confectionary. It's fascinating, involves technical prowess, blended with science. I am sharing one of those (Raspberry Cheese Cake) in the attachment.

What change did you bring in the hotel's menu to fit with the changing time and new normal?

Hyatt's food philosophy is based on thoughtfully sourced ingredients and carefully served cuisine. The menu designed is mostly freshly cooked, with live cooking stations. The menu focuses on locally source ingredients which is fresh and organic. Menu at all our restaurants and events are based on ingredients which are beneficial for immunity. Usage of fresh greens from our own kitchen gardens and are locally inspired dishes.



MY GO-TO RECIPE

RASPBERRY CHEESE CAKE WITH WINTER BERRIES

INGREDIENTS

For the Raspberry Mousse

- 250g (9 oz.) frozen raspberries, defrosted
- 100g. (4 oz.) caster sugar
- 1 packet and ¼ teaspoon of powdered gelatin, soaked in 3 tablespoons of Crème Yvette for 5 minutes
- 2 egg whites, at room temperature
- 300ml heavy whipping cream

For the topping

- 250g (9 oz.) frozen medley of berries, defrosted
- 50g (2 oz.) caster sugar
- 1 ¼ teaspoons powdered gelatin, soaked in cold water for 5 minutes
- For the garnishing options
- Red currants, white currants, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries
- Edible silver or gold leaf and mint strips

METHOD OF PREPARATION

- To make the Raspberry mousse in a small bowl sprinkle the gelatine over 3 tablespoons of the liquor (or cold water) and let it soften for 5 minutes.
- In a food processor or blender, blend the raspberries and sugar until thoroughly incorporated.
- Pressing hard on solids, strain the purée through a fine-mesh sieve, set over a sauce pan.
- Heat the mixture over moderate

low heat until the purée hot but not simmering.

- Whisk the gelatine into the raspberry purée until completely dissolved, check for any lumps.
- First, separate the egg whites, and place them into a clean grease-free bowl, beat the white on medium high speed, until thick and foamy, but not stiff. If you do it in this order, you don't need to wash the beaters in between (cream on the beaters would prevent the whites from whipping).
- Now, whisk the cream with a hand mixer on medium speed until soft peaks form. In 2-3 batches, stir the cooled raspberry purée into the cream. Now add a quarter of the whites and stir them in, this will loosen the mixture and get it ready for the rest of the whites.
- Again, in batches, fold in egg whites. In a figure eight motion thoroughly incorporate the mixture. Pour the mixture on top of the sponge cake base; shake the tin gently until the surface is smooth.
- Chill for 3 hours, or overnight. Put summer berries topping in a mixer, blend the defrosted berries, sugar and 3 tablespoons of water until smooth, press through a fine-mesh sieve into a small saucepan.
- Heat the purée over moderate low heat and stir in the soaked gelatin (1 ¼ teaspoon of gelatin over cold water or the liquor, let it soak for 5 minutes).
- Whisk until completely dissolved. Leave to cool for 15 minutes and then pour, over the mousse. Chill for 1 hour or overnight.
- Garnish with red currants, blueberries, raspberries, mint strips, edible silver or gold flakes



A BIG DAMP SQUIB

Most of the appeals from hospitality industry, reeling under pandemic blues, were once again royally ignored in the Union Budget

THE Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget for the fourth time, but this year marked her shortest speech. Closer towards the end of her talk, she said, "We recognise that post the second wave of

Covid-19, the hospitality sector was in difficulty and needed support."

This gave some hope to industry stakeholders who were closely following her speech. She then stated, "Since Emergency Credit Line Guarantee (ECLGS) worked

well for MSMEs, we thought this is the best formulation. We have added INR 50,000cr to ECLGS for the benefit of hospitality, related sectors."

DROPS IN THE OCEAN

This particular statement was the

biggest takeaway for most people in the industry. Everyone welcomed the extension of the ECLGS by INR 5,000 crores for the hospitality and related sectors. "It's good to see the mention of the hospitality and related sector in this year's Budget. The past few years have been tumultuous for the hospitality segment, and I am hopeful that this initiative gives the industry a much-needed boost."

Most people in the sector added that the Union Budget is a good start for the segment, which desperately needed financial assistance and infrastructural support. The budget surely focused on growth. Rural tourist places have been doing well with all investment on infrastructures like roads, bridges and ropeways, in the past two years. New trains and routes will see a lot of domestic travel and generate consumption. The focus on modernising infrastructure and expansion of highways under PM Gati Shakti will give impetus to intercity mobility by connecting major economic hubs and saving travel time for people. This is especially pertinent since the recovery of international travel might take more time, considering the threat of more COVID-19 variants.

The initiatives may create a few more jobs in the hospitality sector, which saw massive lay-offs over the past couple of years. The sector accounts for 39 million jobs or 8 per cent of India's total workforce. The extension of the ECLGS by one more year, with an additional amount being earmarked exclusively for the hospitality and related enterprises is a big boost to the sector. It will strengthen investments and create millions of additional jobs.

While welcoming these twin moves, some experts expressed their delight on the rolling out of ePass-

ports, which was proposed a few months ago by the External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar. Besides boosting security, it will make inbound international travel convenient by cutting down long queues at immigration counters and supporting a faster revival of international travel in a pandemic-driven environment.

However, the hospitality industry still remains incredibly fragile and faces myriad critical issues such as rising inflation, higher utility bills, wages and raw material costs.

GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT

The industry badly needed a tax holiday wherein members get relief from paying taxes for a year, along with temporary relief to comfort the cash flow crisis which has affected the vital functionality of the industry. Industry bodies feel that the Union Budget did not pay particular attention to the hospitality industry, which bore the pandemic's brunt more than most other sectors. "We were hoping for some relief or some measures that would help the industry in the months and years to come," said one of the heads of an industry body.

Several hospitality associations, including the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) submitted a comprehensive list of recommendations prior to the Union Budget 2022-23 to the Finance Ministry outlining some of the much-needed expectations of the Hospitality industry.

The foremost request was that the industry should be allowed to carry forward business losses up from the existing 8 years to 12 years and avail the Service Exports from India Scheme/ Export Promotion Capital Goods (SEIS/EPCG) benefits without any capping and rate reductions. The Budget was also expected to provide

extension on the timeline for export obligation under EPCG scheme and grant Export Status to the industry; inclusion of hotels and tourism related sectors in the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), offer special emphasis for promoting meetings and conferences at hotels in view of the massive setback that hotels suffered due to the pandemic; grant Infrastructure Status to the hospitality industry, and provision of special tax incentives for domestic travel.

Inclusion in the NIP, set up under the Development Financial Institution (DFI) by the Ministry of Finance for promoting infrastructure funding would have enabled the COVID hit hospitality sector to avail funds with extended repayment periods at a low rate of interest. The hotel industry is a long gestation industry which incurs losses in the initial years of operations and profitability improves only after a few years. Because of this, most hotels carry forward business losses with the expectation to set them off over the coming years.

However, the industry's profitability took a massive hit due to the unprecedented pandemic conditions and expects businesses to post losses for the next few years. This may result in hotels being unable to set off past business losses within a period of eight years, adversely impacting cash-flow and return of investment (RoI). Hence, industry bodies made a request that business losses be allowed to be carried forward from the existing 8 years to 12 years.

The hospitality industry is facing an existential crisis due to the lockdowns and restrictions imposed on it due to the on-going pandemic. Hence industry associations stated that the sector has been relying heavily on the support and favourable policies of the Government for



The industry badly needed a tax holiday wherein members get relief from paying taxes for a year, along with temporary relief to comfort the cash flow crisis which has affected the vital functionality of the industry

its recovery. It was also stated that hotels under Service Sectors witnessed a high decline in business scenarios post 2007. Occupancy dropped by 20 per cent to 40 per cent and the decline of foreign exchange earnings during this period had been in excess of 5% on a year-on-year basis.

Increasing SEIS entitlement from existing 3 per cent to 10 percent of the net Foreign Exchange Earnings for the next three to five financial years can help the industry mitigate some of the damage inflicted on it due to the pandemic. Also, to

accelerate and incentivize all-round development of Tourism infrastructure catering to foreign tourists, fiscal incentives in the form of SEIS certificates and import against EPCG should be continued for the near future. In view of the volatile economic environment, the timeline for meeting Export Obligations (EO) must also be extended by at least four years for all the EPCG licenses which have EO period falling from February 2020 onwards. The granting of Export Status to the hospitality Industry with tax incentives and benefits would enable the sector to be more competitive

and help the sector to jumpstart its growth.

Among other recommendations, the industry bodies asked that special emphasis be given for promoting meetings and conferences at hotels in India in view of the massive losses suffered through the pandemic. Incentives should be offered to corporations for organizing meetings and conferences at hotels in India. This may include giving partial or full tax exemptions to the corporates on the expenses incurred. This will encourage corporations to hold meetings and conferences within the country

which will be a win-win situation for both. Expenses incurred by corporations for meetings and conferences abroad should not be considered as business expenditure. This will discourage MICE events abroad and help in conserving the foreign exchange while boosting the sales of domestic hospitality businesses. This will also help in generating employment at home.

In its recommendations to Fin-Min, associations have pleaded for one of the industry's long-standing demands of receiving Infrastructure status and Industry status. Their request to the government to classify hospitality under the RBI Infrastructure lending norm criteria for access to long term funds to enhance quality accommodation supply, is long pending. This will stimulate higher global and domestic travel demand. Currently hotels built with an investment of Rs 200 crores or more have been accorded infrastructure status. This threshold has to be brought down to Rs.10 crores per hotel to give fillip to hotels in the budget segment. This will enable hotels to avail term loans at lower rates of interest and also have a longer repayment period.

Under the prevailing conditions, the post-pandemic business environment strongly demands facilitative measures from the Government to provide enough incentives to encourage the 28 million plus people who travel out of India to stay back and holiday in India. Since opening up of foreign travel remains a matter of contention, the industry bodies had requested that the Government induces domestic travel by promoting local destinations. Incentivising domestic travel through tax cuts or by way of tax deductions for a pre-agreed duration, say two to three years, will fill the void

Currently hotels built with an investment of Rs 200 crores or more have been accorded infrastructure status. This threshold has to be brought down to Rs.10 crores, to give fillip to hotels in the budget segment

and help local tourism survive until international travel resumes. Of the 28 million who travel out of the country, if the domestic market can tap into even a part of this segment, it'll help promote domestic travel and also retain the outgoing foreign exchange from India.

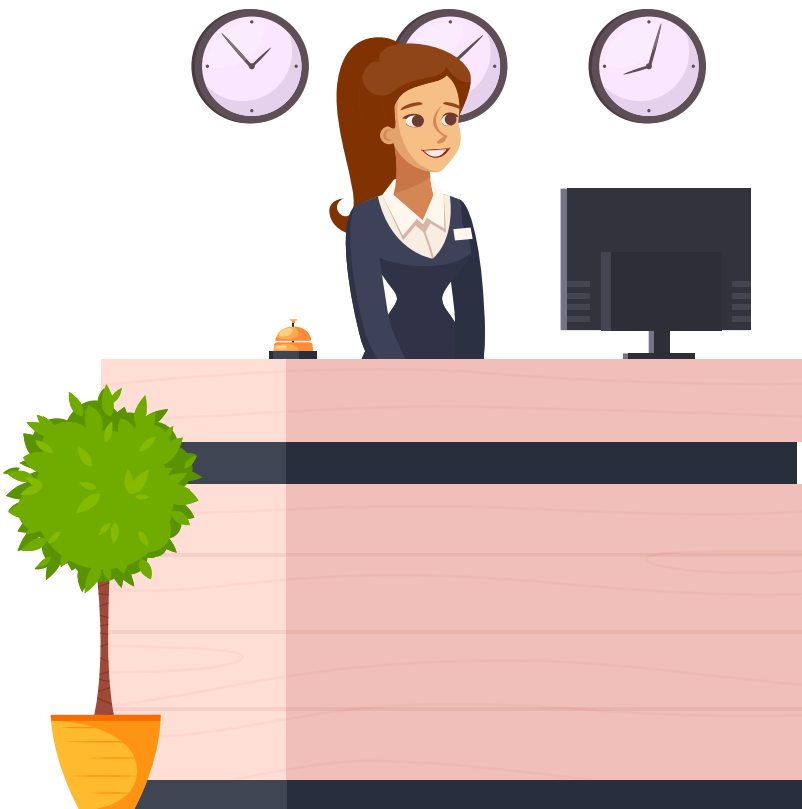
There's a need to encourage people to spend within the country to aid the hospitality industry's revival. For this, associations requested the Hon'ble Finance Minister to allow tax deductions in the IT return of individuals and corporates for expenses made for travel within the country. Also, they'd request that the decision to introduce LTC cash vouchers in lieu of LTC fare to the Central Government employees be reviewed for boosting domestic travel and helping the hospitality industry in its path to recovery.



ADVANTAGE

INDIA

India Tourism & Hospitality Industry Report was compiled by India Brand Equity Foundation in November.



THE Indian tourism and hospitality industry have emerged as one of the key drivers of growth among the services sector in India. Tourism in India has significant potential considering the rich cultural and historical heritage, variety in ecology, terrains and places of natural beauty spread across the country.

Tourism is an important source of foreign exchange in India similar to many other countries. The foreign exchange earnings from 2016 to 2019 grew at a CAGR of 7% but dipped in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In FY20, the tourism sector in India accounted for 39 million jobs, which was 8.0% of the total employment in

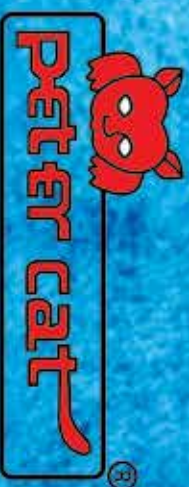
the country. By 2029, it is expected to account for about 53 million jobs.

According to WTTC, India ranked 10th among 185 countries in terms of travel & tourism's total contribution to GDP in 2019. During 2019, contribution of travel & tourism to GDP was 6.8% of the total economy, ~ Rs. 13,68,100 crore (US\$ 194.30 billion).

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Market Size

India is the most digitally advanced traveller nation in terms of digital tools being used for planning, booking, and experiencing a journey. India's rising middle class and increasing disposable income has supported the growth of domestic and out-bound tourism.

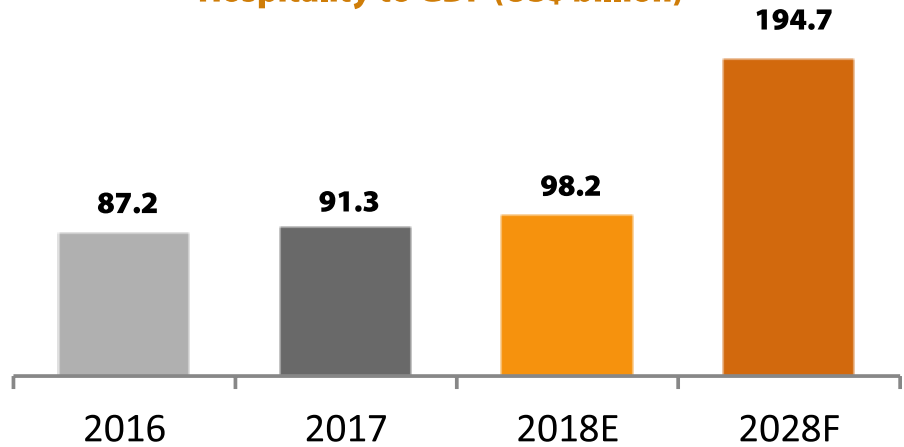
By 2028, Indian tourism and hospitality is expected to earn US\$ 50.9 billion as visitor exports compared with US\$ 28.9 billion in 2018.

The travel market in India is projected to reach US\$ 125 billion by FY27 from an estimated US\$ 75 billion in FY20.

The Indian airline travel market was estimated at ~US\$ 20 billion and is projected to double in size by FY27 due to improving airport infrastruc-



Direct Contribution of Tourism and Hospitality to GDP (US\$ billion)



Note: F - Forecast

ture and growing access to passports.

The Indian hotel market including domestic, inbound and outbound was estimated at ~US\$ 32 billion in FY20 and is expected to reach ~US\$ 52 billion by FY27, driven by the surging demand from travelers and sustained efforts of travel agents to boost the market.

During 2019, foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India stood at 10.93 million, achieving a growth rate of 3.5% y-o-y. During 2019, FEEs from tourism increased 4.8% y-o-y to Rs. 1,94,881 crore (US\$ 29.96 billion). In 2019, arrivals through e-Tourist Visa increased by 23.6% y-o-y to 2.9 million. In 2020, FTAs decreased by 75.5% YoY to 2.68 million and arrivals through e-Tourist Visa (Jan-Nov) decreased by 67.2% YoY to 0.84 million. As of March 2021, the e-Tourist Visa facility was extended to citizens of 171 countries.

In April 2021, the percentage share of FTAs was highest from USA (26.85%), followed by Bangladesh (15.65%), Afghanistan (6.92%), UK (5.87%), Nepal (4.59%), Canada (4.27%), Iraq (2.99%), Portugal (2.40%), Germany (1.42%), Russian Fed (1.41%)

Maldives (1.39%), France (1.33%), Sudan (1.21%), Korea (Rep.) (1.18%), and Australia (1.02%).

In April 2021, the percentage share of FTAs in India was highest at Bengaluru Airport (29.96%), followed by Mumbai Airport (17.48%), Ahmedabad Airport (15.72%), Delhi Airport (9.21%), Cochin Airport (4.91%), Chennai Airport (4.04%), Hyderabad Airport (3.34%), Lucknow Airport (2.40%), Bhavnagar Seaport (2.37%), Kolkata Airport (2.11%), Calicut Airport (1.41%), Amritsar Airport (1.35%), Kakinada Seaport (1.32%), Dabolim (Goa) (0.91%), Mangalore Airport (0.72%).

Between January 2021 and April 2021, FTAs were 376,083 as compared with 2.35 million between January 2020 and April 2020, registering a negative growth of -84.0% Y-o-Y due to COVID-19.

By 2028, international tourist arrivals are expected to reach 30.5 billion and generate revenue over US\$ 59 billion. However, domestic tourists are expected to drive the growth, post pandemic.

International hotel chains are increasing their presence in the country,



and it will account for around 47% share in the tourism and hospitality sector of India by 2020 and 50% by 2022.

As per the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FH-RAI), in FY21, the Indian hotel industry has taken a hit of >Rs. 1.30 lakh crore (US\$ 17.81 billion) in revenue due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation selected Pochampally in Telangana as one of the best tourism villages in November 2021.

Investments

India was globally the third largest in terms of investment in travel and tourism with an inflow of US\$ 45.7 billion in 2018, accounting for 5.9% of the total investment in the country.

The hotel & tourism sector received cumulative FDI inflow of US\$ 15.89 billion between April 2000 and June 2021.

The Indian government has estimated that India would emerge with a market size of 1.2 million cruise visitors by 2030-31. Dream Hotel Group plans to invest around US\$300 million in the next 3-5 years for the development of the cruise sector in India.

Government Initiatives

The Indian Government has realised the country's potential in the tourism industry and has taken several steps to make India a global tourism hub.

Some of the major initiatives planned by the Government of India to boost the tourism and hospitality sector of India are as follows:

- From November 15, 2021, India allowed fully vaccinated foreign tourists to visit India, which in turn will help revive the Indian travel and hospitality sector.
- In November 2021, the Ministry of Tourism signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation to strengthen the hospitality and tourism industry. The ministry has also signed an MoU with Easemytrip, Cleartrip, Yatra.com, Make My Trip and Goibibo.
- In November 2021, the Indian government planned a conference to boost film tourism in the country with an aim to establish domestic spots as preferred filming destinations. This move is expected to create jobs and boost tourism in the country.

- In October 2021, Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi launched the Kushinagar International Airport in Uttar Pradesh to boost tourism.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly disrupted the Tourism industry. In September 2021, the Ministry of Tourism announced plans to allow international tourists to enter India and formal protocols are under discussion. According to the previous announcements, the first five lakh foreign tourists will be issued visas free of cost.
- In September 2021, the government launched NIDHI 2.0 (National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry) scheme which will maintain a database of hospitality sector components such as accommodation units, travel agents, tour operators, & others. NIDHI 2.0 will facilitate the digitalisation of the tourism sector by encouraging all hotels to register themselves on the platform.
- In July 2021, the ministry drafted a proposal titled 'National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism' and has requested recommendations and feedback from several Central Ministries, all state and UT governments and administrations as well as industry partners to make the document more comprehensive.
- In May 2021, the Union Minister of State for Tourism & Culture Mr. Prahlad Singh Patel participated in the G20 tourism ministers' meeting to collaborate with member countries in protecting tourism businesses, jobs and taking initiatives to frame policy guidelines to support the sustainable and resilient recovery of travel and tourism.
- Government is planning to boost tourism in India by leveraging the lighthouses in the country. 71 lighthouses have been identified for development as tourist spots.

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has introduced a new scheme called 'All India Tourist Vehicles Authorisation and Permit Rules, 2021', in which a tourist vehicle operator can register online for All India Tourist Authorisation/Permit. This permit will be issued within 30 days of submitting the application.
- In February 2021, the Ministry of Tourism under the Government of India's Regional Office (East) in Kolkata collaborated with Eastern Himalayas Travel & Tour Operator Association (resource partner) and the IIAS School of Management as



- (knowledge partner) to organise an 'Incredible India Mega Homestay Development & Training' workshop. 725 homestay owners from Darjeeling, Kalimpong and the foothills of Dooars were trained in marketing, sales and behavioural skills
- On January 25, 2021, Union Tourism and Culture Minister Mr. Prahlad Singh Patel announced a plan to develop an international-level infrastructure in Kargil (Ladakh) to promote adventure tourism and winter sports.
- The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) runs a series of Bharat Darshan tourist trains aimed at taking people to various pilgrimages across the country.
- On November 4, 2020, the Union Minister of State (IC) for Tourism & Culture Mr. Prahlad Singh Patel inaugurated the "Tourist Facilitation Centre" facility constructed under the project "Development of Guruvayur, Kerala" (under the PRASHAD Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism).
- Under Budget 2020-21, the Government of India has allotted Rs. 207.55 crore (US\$ 29.70 million) for development of tourist circuits under PRASAD scheme.
- The Ministry of Tourism's 'DekhoApnaDesh' webinar series titled '12 Months of Adventure Travel' on November 28, 2020, is likely to promote India as an adventure tourism destination.
- On January 26, 2021, Maharashtra Chief Minister Mr. Uddhav Thackeray inaugurated Balasaheb Thackeray Gorewada International Zoological Park in Nagpur. It is India's largest zoological park spread over 564 hectares and expected to attract ~2.5 million tourists a year.
- The Ministry of Tourism developed an initiative called SAATHI (System for Assessment, Awareness & Training for

Hospitality Industry) by partnering with the Quality Council of India (QCI) in October 2020. The initiative will effectively implement guidelines/SOPs issued with reference to COVID-19 for safe operations of hotels, restaurants, B&Bs and other units.

- Statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, also known as 'Statue of Unity', was inaugurated in October 2018. It is the highest standing statue in the world at a height of 182 metre. It is expected to boost the tourism sector in the country and put it on the world tourism map.
- Under Budget 2020-21, the Government of India has allotted Rs. 1,200 crore (US\$ 171.70 million) for development of tourist circuits under Swadesh Darshan for eight Northeast states.

State Government Initiatives

- In October 2021, the Tripura government collaborated with Infovalley Educational & Research (P) Ltd. as part of a public-private partnership (PPP) to run the State Institute of Hotel Management (SIHM). Through the SIHM, the government aims to empower the youth and contribute to the growth of hotels and hospitality management in the state.
- In July 2021, the Kerala government, in collaboration with Vythiri in Wayanad, initiated a campaign to vaccinate all tourism and hospitality stakeholders.
- The Ministry of Tourism sanctioned three projects for a total amount of Rs. 179.68 crore (US\$ 24.24 million) under the Swadesh Darshan scheme in Gujarat.
- In July 2021, the Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) invited applications to operate shacks in six major beaches of the state.
- In July 2021, the Tamil Nadu state government decided to imple-

Staycation is seen as an emerging trend where people stay at luxurious hotels to relieve stress in a peaceful getaway. To cater to such needs, major hotel chains have introduced staycation offers where guests can choose from a host of curated experiences, within the hotel

ment an integrated mega tourism plan, which included new lighting arrangements for the Thiruvalluvar statue at Kanyakumari, starting renovations at Poompuhar tourist spot and improving roads leading to tourist spots, spiritual places and adventure tourism spots. It also includes unveiling a new tourism policy, establishing more hotels, resorts, and convention centres and increasing the contribution of public and private sectors in the tourism sector.

- In July 2021, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority urged stakeholders in the tourism sector in the state to register with the Andhra Pradesh Tourism under the Tourism Trade Registration and Facilitation Guidelines 2020.
- In June 2021, the Odisha state government announced a financial package for the COVID-hit tourism sector of the state.

Achievements

Following are the achievements of the Government during 2019-20:

- During 2019-20, an additional fund Rs. 1,854.67 crore (US\$ 269.22 million) was sanctioned for new projects under the Swadesh Darshan scheme.
- Ministry of Tourism sanctioned 18 projects covering all the North Eastern States for Rs. 1,456 crore (US\$ 211.35 million) to develop and promote tourism in the region under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes.
- Statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, also known as 'State of Unity', was inaugurated in October 2018 and the total revenue generated till November 2019 stood at Rs. 82.51 crore (US\$ 11.81 million).

Road Ahead

Staycation is seen as an emerging trend where people stay at luxurious hotels to relieve stress in a peaceful getaway. To cater to such needs, major hotel chains such as Marriott International, IHG Hotels & Resorts and Oberoi hotels are introducing staycation offers where guests can choose from a host of curated experiences, within the hotel.

India's travel and tourism industry has huge growth potential. The industry is also looking forward to the expansion of e-Visa scheme, which is expected to double the tourist inflow in India. India's travel and tourism industry has the potential to expand by 2.5% on the back of higher budgetary allocation and low-cost healthcare facilities according to a joint study conducted by Assocham and Yes Bank.

Source: Report compiled by IBEF with media reports, Ministry of Tourism press releases, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Press Information Bureau (PIB), Union Budget 2020-21.



► In blended models of education, remote and digital platforms support in-person classroom teaching and contribute to minimising teacher workload



SKILLS FOR FUTURE

What does the future hold for hospitality education?

As education practices worldwide reorient around a new normal, the next generation of hospitality leaders and designers are being offered more choice in ways they learn the ropes.

When the world went remote at the onset of COVID-19, few sectors were impacted as immediately and significantly as education. The classroom was suddenly off-limits, traditional in-person teaching became filtered through an omnipresent digital barrier, and practical subjects that had long dealt with real-world implications via hands-on learning were forced to entirely reconsider their approach. This mass transition to Zoom groups and online lessons may have hit some areas of study and knowledge harder than others, but the damage was already done – a recent study by McKinsey shows that students from the ages of 5 to 18 were on average five months behind in mathematics and four months

behind in reading by the end of the school year.

Given more time to implement this digitally enabled means of teaching, the education system would perhaps have been better prepared, and the results less stark. Much like the working from home revolution, however, this whiplash shift into off-site operation has opened up a new realm of possibility and driven a wave of innovation. As students return to school and mandates loosen worldwide, there will inevitably be programmes that depart from the traditional models. Speaking to the Guardian, Hannah Owen of the Nesta Innovation Foundation noted that: 'COVID has given an impetus to schools to adopt, roll out and use more of the functionality of ed-tech tools. It's likely, and optimal, that we'll move to blended models, where remote and digital platforms support in-person classroom teaching, and contribute to minimising teacher workload.'



► **Learning culinary skills through online teaching is not an easy task**

At a time when the hospitality industry is plagued by labour shortages, and operators struggle to advertise working in restaurants, hotels and bars as a fully-fledged career option, a reassessment of how key skills in these sectors are taught could correct the course. Indeed, research by the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Foundation (AHLEF) shows that over half of Gen Z – the demographic at the heart of this sea change – would consider a job in hospitality, but as a recent influx of contactless technology and virtual platforms has worked to reduce the need for onsite staff, a new approach is more necessary than ever.

Institutional insights

'In a lot of cases there is still great

design but little attention is paid to operations, or the reverse – great operations but not the kind of design that achieves a certain lifestyle and image,' says Dr Ines Klemm, the newly appointed leader of the hospitality design programme at the Swiss Hotel Management School, where she intends to bridge the gap between design and operational learning and prepare students for a career that spans the increasingly blurred lines of the hotel sector. 'There's only a handful of projects I think that do both, but it needs a completely different process from the beginning if you hope to achieve it. This is what I'd like students to be aware of – the common ground.'

Taught on campus, this course might not embody the revolutionary

methodology of distance learning ed-tech, but nonetheless offers students a decidedly modern approach; when designers are creating not just spaces but the experiential dimensions today's guests desire, students must be grounded in matters from visual aesthetics to spiritual mindfulness to back-of-house footfall efficiency to technological innovation. Likewise, over at Les Roches International School of Hotel Management, the Spark innovation incubator complements a core operational curriculum with consultancy challenges and partner company content intended to facilitate deeper understanding in non-traditional subjects like the growth of blockchain, facial recognition and e-commerce.

In the case of the institutions at

least, the form might remain familiar, though the content is undergoing a radical shift in line with the sector it concerns. 'Learning to be a hospitality designer is one of the biggest responsibilities you can have in terms of a task's complexity,' Klemm adds. 'It's a unifying environment – people and their space under the condition of mobility. In that sense I think students also become culture ambassadors, because they understand the whole operation from food to events to financials.'

Books for brands

The most prominent change will perhaps not be found in the curriculum, but rather who provides it. As the classroom enters the digital space and adopts a more flexible model it will allow hospitality brands to follow suit. The news that IHG has launched its own free online skills academy indicates that operators themselves are seeking to tailor hospitality education to their preference and benefit. In a hyper-segmented marketplace wherein brands are seeking to distinguish themselves, what better way to do so than instilling future workers with lessons in their own unique culture? 'To support a sustainable pipeline of talent for the hospitality industry, new features are already being developed in the platform, which will enable IHG to tailor and fast-track the recruitment process for participants who have completed certain modules,' a launch statement reads.

A similar approach has been adopted by Thai hospitality company Dusit to serve its F&B ambitions, with a newly minted Food School in Bangkok targeting young professionals via an incubator, test kitchen and culinary institute. So too on the supplier side, as Vitra partners with the Glasgow School of Art and CitizenM

to allow students to reimagine classic furniture pieces for a new generation of guests as pieces deployed in functioning lobbies.

Where this new educational landscape has opened up a global scope of student accessibility for these brands, however, should they bank on this route exclusively they run the risk of losing a vital connection with locale. In this vein, non-profit hospitality education group Saira and its pop-up school model could prove an effective middle ground, adopting the flexible educational forms the pandemic has permitted whilst em-

phasising the importance of in-person learning. 'A constant idea I have is that you have to give before you take,' says founder Harsha L'Acqua. 'I talk about it a lot in terms of hotels giving education before they take resources, build their hotels, and make money. I would like to see hotels really think about what their footprint is when they are at these early stages of developing and designing!' For a sector where human connection and personal service has always been at the core, this educational starting point will be a meaningful balance to strike.



► Hospitality students must become culture ambassadors in future



POLICY

ZONE IN FOCUS

Ministry of Tourism's Annual Report 2020-2021 details the fund allocation and actual disbursement on tourist spots of North East India

NORTH EAST Region of India comprises eight States namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. The location of the region is strategically important as it has international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Myanmar. The North Eastern Region is endowed with diverse tourist attractions and

each State has its own distinct features.

The Ministry of Tourism provides special emphasis on the development and promotion of tourism for North Eastern States. The initiatives of the Ministry of Tourism include:

i. Space on complimentary basis is provided to the North Eastern States, in the India Pavilions set up at major International Travel Fairs and Exhi-

bitions, including WTM in London, ITB in Berlin, etc. to give these States an opportunity to showcase and promote their tourist products in the international source markets.

ii. Familiarization (FAM) Tours to the North Eastern Region are arranged for Travel and Media Representatives from Overseas to the States in the regions on a regular basis under the Hospitality Scheme of this Ministry.



▶ North East is endowed with diverse tourist attractions and each state has its own distinct features

iii. Domestic Campaigns are also launched to promote tourism to the North Eastern Region.

iv. International Tourism Mart is an annual event organised in the North Eastern region with the objective of highlighting the tourism potential of the region in the domestic and international markets. It brings together the tourism business fraternity and entrepreneurs from the eight North Eastern States. The event is planned and scheduled to facilitate interaction between buyers, sellers, media, Government agencies and other stakeholders.

v. Ministry provides financial assistance to North Eastern States which includes assistance for development of tourist infrastructure, promotion of fairs/festivals & tourism related events in the region, information technology related projects, publicity campaigns, market development assistance, human resource development, market research, etc.

vi. As per the modified guidelines of MDA dated 28.11.2020, Financial support will be extended to the tourism service providers for undertaking the promotional activities within the country that is Participation in domestic travel fairs / exhibitions; Participation in Tourism related Conferences /Conventions / Seminars organized by National Tourism and Hospitality Associations including ADTOI, ATOAI, FHRAI, IATO, ABTO, ICPB, IHHA, ITTA, HAI, TAAI, TAFI & FAITH and by reputed Commerce, Industry and Trade Organizations/ Associations in the country, such as CII, FICCI, ASSO-CHAM, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Indian Chambers of Commerce and any other trade association recognised by the Ministry of Tourism from time to time; Participation in Conferences / Seminars / Conventions / organised by the Central and State

Government Tourism Ministries; Participation in Road Shows in different regions of the country and for Online Promotion of tourism destinations and products, tour packages in the domestic market, including production of digital promotional brochures / leaflets. Apart from this, financial support will be extended to Tourism Departments of State Governments / UT Administrations for undertaking the promotional activities within the country that is participation in domestic travel fairs and exhibitions; Online Promotion of tourism destinations and products, tour packages in the domestic market, including production of digital promotional brochures and leaflets and for travel undertaken by officers and staff of state govt or UT administration for tourism product familiarisation.

Apart from this, one additional tour (above the three tours) will be permissible for visiting any state in the North East region, J&K and Ladakh. As regards the revised guidelines for the recognition of Tourism Service Provider the criteria for grant of recognition green shoots to start-ups and for experienced Travel Agents or Tour Operators & Tourist Transport Operator operating in North East region, Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep Islands has been relaxed in terms of paid up capital, annual turnover & office space.

12.2 Protected Area Permit (PAP)/ Restricted Area Permit (RAP): For a better and smooth travel experience of Tourists in the restricted/Protected area of the country, Ministry of Tourism regularly coordinates with Ministry of Home Affairs and as a result of this Ministry of Home Affairs has relaxed the PAP/RAP for a further period of 5 Years, that is till 31.12.2022 in the states of Manipur, Mizoram

SWADESH DARSHAN

Details of Amount released under Swadesh Darshan Scheme upto 31st December, 2020

1. Arunachal North-East Development of Circuit Pradesh- Circuit Bhalukpong- Bomdila and Tawang 39.81
2. Manipur North-East Development of Circuit at Imphal- Circuit Khongjom 61.32
3. Sikkim North-East Development of Circuit linking Circuit Rangpo (entry) – Rorathang-AritarPhadamchen- Nathang-SherathangTsongmo- Gangtok-PhodongMangan- Lachung-YumthangLachen- Thangu-Gurudongmer-Mangan- Tumin-Lingee-Singtam (exit) 92.77
4. Mizoram North East Integrated Development of Thenzawl Circuit & South Zote, Districts Serchhip and Reiek 87.65
5. Arunachal North East Integrated Development of Jirigaon, 84.24
6. Tripura North East Development of North East Circuit: 79.67
7. Meghalaya North East Development of Umiam (Lake View), Circuit U Lum Sohpetbneng-Mawdiangdiang – Orchid Lake Resort 92.91
8. Manipur Spiritual Development of Shri Govindajee Circuit Temple, – Shri Gopinath Temple – Shri -Bungshibodon Temple – Shri Kaina Temple 43.04
9. Sikkim North East Development of Tourist Circuit circuit Linking Lingmoo-Lingee– Maka-Temi-Bermoik-Namchi- Okharey-Sombaria-Daramdin- Melli (Exit) 76.25
10. Nagaland Tribal circuit Development of Mokokchung-Tuensang-Mon 88.33



► **Many tourist spots in Assam received central fund through SWADESH and PRASAD schemes**

and Nagaland and Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

12.3 Domestic Promotion and Publicity including Hospitality (DPPH) Scheme: Domestic tourism plays an important role in the overall development of the tourism sector in India. The Ministry of Tourism undertakes various promotional activities for the promotion of Domestic Tourism and with the objective of increasing Domestic Tourist Visits.

These activities are primarily aimed at increasing awareness about tourism destinations and products, promoting tourism within the country with focus on priority areas like the North East and Jammu & Kashmir.

Spreading Social Awareness mes-

sages and promoting events which have the potential for attracting tourists.

1.8 For tourism infrastructure creation in the country, Ministry of Tourism has two major schemes, launched during 2014-15, namely, Swadesh Darshan - Integrated Development of Theme-Based Tourist Circuits and PRASHAD- Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive for development of tourism infrastructure in the country including historical places and heritage cities.

1.9 Swadesh Darshan scheme has a vision to develop theme-based tourist circuits on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner by

synergizing efforts to focus on needs and concerns of all stakeholders to enrich tourist experience and enhance employment opportunities. Under the scheme, fifteen thematic circuits have been identified for development, namely: North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Heritage Circuit, Tirthankar Circuit & Sufi Circuit. Since the inception of the scheme, an amount of Rs. 5684.67 crore has been sanctioned for 76 projects with a total release of Rs. 4278.88 crore (till 31.12.2020) covering all thematic circuits under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme.



► **The Orchid Lake Resort, along with Umiam lake zone near Shillong, Meghalaya, received substantial fund in SWADESH scheme**

1.10 Under PRASHAD scheme, 57 sites have been identified at present in 29 States/UTs for development. Since the inception of the scheme in January 2015, an amount of Rs. 1160.55 crore has been sanctioned for 36 projects in 24 States with the cumulative release of Rs. 622.08 crore till 12th Jan. 2021.

As on date the total number of sites identified for development under the scheme at present are 57 in 29 states/UTs. Not many sites from East or North East feature in the list: Parasuram Kund (Lohit District, Arunachal Pradesh), Kamakhya and Srikrishna-

guru Sevashram, Nasatra (Assam), Patna and Gaya (Bihar), Deogarh and Parasnath (Jharkhand), Charanthala Durga Temple-Babedpara, Nartiang Shakti Temple, Nongsawlia Church-Sohra, Madan Air Nar Sacred Pool Near Jowai (Meghalaya), Changsil Kaisairang, Presbyterian Church- Dawrpui, Khawruhlian, Solomon's Temple, Kidron Valley and Serkawr (Mizoram), Cathedral of Kohima, Noksen Church, Mission Compound, Aizuto, Molungkimong and Vankhosung-Wokha (Nagaland), Puri (Odisha), Yuksom (Sikkim), Tripura Sundari- Agartala (Tripura), and Belur (West Bengal).

PRASHAD

- **Details of Amount released under PRASHAD Scheme during Jan.-Dec. 2020**
- **Development of Kamakhya under PRASHAD Scheme, Assam 2.54**
- **Development of Baba Baidyanathji Dham, Jharkhand 9.00**
- **Development of Pilgrimage Facilitation at Nagaland 5.95**
- **Development of Pilgrimage Facilitation at Meghalaya 6.53**
*in Rs crores

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Dated: 7th February, 2022

NOTIFICATION

This is for information of the public in general and the Hotel Management aspirant (Indian Nationals) in particular that as per Govt. of India policy, **NCHM JEE 2022** will be conducted by “**National Testing Agency**” a Central Government Agency, created by the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India, to conduct all major Entrance Examination in the Country.

Dedicated Portal for calling the on-line application to appear in **NCHM JEE 2022** for admission to “3-year (Six Semesters) B.Sc.(HHA) program” in more than 78 IHMs(Govt. as well as Private) under the academic umbrella of NCHMCT has been opened by “**National Testing Agency**” from 4th February, 2022 at <https://www.nchmjee.nta.nic.in> One can get link of the online portal from <http://nchm.gov.in>. The on-line portal will remain open till 3rd May 2022.

Examination	Date of Examination	Timing of Examination
NCHM JEE 2022	28 th May, 2022 (Saturday)	10.00 a.m. to 01.00 p.m.

Eligibility: Passed or appearing in 10+2 or equivalent from any stream with English as a compulsory subject from recognized Board/Institute.

Age : 25 Years for General/ EWS / OBC Categories and 28 Years for SC/ST/PwD Categories as on 01.07.2022.

NCHM JEE is a Computer Based Test (CBT) only and there will be no option for “ pen and paper’ exam. Exam will be held in 78 cities in all over India. The exam scheme will remain as same as the previous years on the following components : -

S No	Subject	No. of Questions	Duration
1	Numerical Ability and Analytical Aptitude	30	3.00 hrs
2	Reasoning and Logical Deduction	30	
3	General Knowledge & Current Affairs	30	
4	English Language	60	
5	Aptitude for Service Sector	50	
	TOTAL	200	

Only Vegetarian practical option in the B.Sc.(HHA) Program will also be available in all the affiliated IHMs for which the candidate has to opt Veg Practical only, on their joining at the allotted Institute after admission.

There is a different scheme for direct admission of Foreign Nationals (FN), Non-Resident Indians (NRI) and Person of Indian Origin(PIO or Overseas Citizen of India) students. They need not to appear in the NCHM JEE. The detailed scheme, procedure for admission, fee structure and eligibility is available in the scheme, available at <http://nchm.gov.in/node/1003>.

Sd/-
Director(A&F) and Member of Secretary
NCHMCT, Noida