

Reopen restaurants to kickstart the hospitality industry: HRAWI to Maharashtra government

In response to Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India's (HRAWI) query on the re-opening of restaurants with dine-in services in the Maharashtra, the state government has clarified that restaurants are not allowed to reopen as yet. Days ahead of the Maharashtra Government's latest unlock order, the Association had written to the Government seeking relaxations for the Hospitality Industry including the re-opening of restaurants and also allowing hotels to operate at 100% capacities. While the government has given a nod to the later, the former request did not find any mention in the order dated August 31, 2020.

The industry has appreciated the government's decision to allow hotels to operate with full capacity but is pressing the government to reconsider its decision to allow restaurants to re-open with dine-in services as well. Among other relaxation, the state has discarded the need of obtaining e-pass for inter-district of movement of goods and persons. However, the industry has raised concerns over restrictions that are still being imposed by local bodies like Panchayats in villages.

“We are glad that the government has allowed 100% capacity utilisation for hotels in the state. Restaurants inside hotels are allowed to open for only in-house guests. But this still leaves the industry half submerged. Restaurants are the backbone of the hospitality Industry and kick-starting restaurant operations with dine-in services is the need of the hour for the State, especially when restaurants across the country have been allowed to reopen except in Maharashtra. Let alone the industry point of view, now that the state has allowed free inter-district movement, people are going to need places to eat at during their transit. Without restaurants and eateries, people are going to have a difficult time with no place open to dine-in,” says Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, President, HRAWI.

“It is an encouraging move and we are thankful to the government. Although the order does remedy the issue of limited occupancy for hotels but it continues

to impose a limit on the number of people allowed at social gatherings such as for marriage functions. We have asked that the number of pax allowed for meetings and social gatherings be linked to the size of the venues or halls. Many hotels and restaurants have large banquet halls and open spaces to host larger gatherings while maintaining the required social distancing norms. Venues can accommodate 50 per cent of original capacity following a grid of 6 ft. distance between guests. Of course, this is a request in addition to the more important and pressing need for re-opening restaurants in the state,” says Pradeep Shetty, Vice President, HRAWI.

Among other requests, the HRAWI has asked the government to allow sale of liquor at restaurants as has been allowed in other states like Delhi, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Goa and Diu. It has also recommended that adjoining and adjacent open spaces and terraces be used for restaurants.