

Maharashtra Government ‘Break the Chain’ order puts restaurants out of business

The latest restrictions imposed by Maharashtra Government on restaurants in the State have devastated the hospitality industry. Permitted to operate for only takeaway and delivery services, restaurants see imminent collapse of business within the fortnight. With the latest ‘Break the Chain’ order, at least more than 30 per cent of restaurants will shut down completely.

Approximately 35 per cent of the hotels and restaurants remain shut in the State due to financial stress related to loss incurred after the first lockdown. The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has pointed out that not only restaurants but citizens stepping out of their homes for work and medical emergencies will suffer as a consequence of the decision. With no place to eat whilst out, people will have no choice but to starve and fall prey to illness.

The association has once again requested Government to reconsider the restrictions imposed on restaurants and allow them to operate for dine-in services while following all the SOPs even if within the limited permissible times.

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, vice president, FHRAI, said, “Almost 35 per cent of the hotels and restaurants in the country either haven’t opened fully after the first lockdown was lifted or have shut down permanently due to financial loss. The rest continue to operate in losses and with turnover below 50 per cent of the pre-Covid-19 level. The FHRAI has appealed to State Government to compensate employees engaged in the industry and their families for the loss of income, and also support hoteliers and restaurateurs by waiving off all statutory fees, taxes and utility bills. Our sales figures prove that despite the fact that the restaurants were thrown open at 50 per cent capacity in some states there has not been a proportionate influx of guests.”

“The hospitality industry understands the seriousness of the issue and the limitations that Government is facing in its war against the pandemic. We are one of the most labour intensive industries and understand the prominence of safety protocols which we follow rigorously. After all we too are present in the premises. We too want the spread to come under control and put this bad phase behind us. But in our attempts to accomplish this, if we are going to disrupt an entire sector and the livelihoods of millions of people dependent on it then we are defeating the very purpose of such a decision. This is the case of the cure becoming more deadly than the ailment. Also, this is not affecting just the

Hospitality industry. Today, the everyday labourers and daily wage workers have no place to eat. We have had relatives or friends of hospitalised patients come to our restaurants to check if they could sit and eat but sadly we could offer them only the takeaway option. They cannot sit on the road or the footpath and eat. People trying to get a patient admitted to a hospital do not pack lunch before leaving home. They have no choice but to starve. Right now, hotels and restaurants are one of the safest and the most hygienic places to be at. For the sake of all who are dependent on restaurants for their livelihoods and also for those who rely on us for a decent place to eat with safety and dignity, we once again appeal to the Government to reconsider its decision and allow us to operate for dine-in services,” concluded Mr. Kohli.