

## **Only 30% business for Maharashtra hotels and restaurants in slow turnaround**

The hotels and restaurants in Maharashtra have seen a sharp decline in patrons after reopening of business following almost a seven-month-long closure due to Covid-19 triggered lockdown.

Fear of contracting Covid-19, shortage of hotel staff, restrictions on the number of guests and menu along with travel restrictions have all impacted business, which has dropped to just 30% compared to the pre-Covid-19 era, according to the hotel and restaurant association of western India (HRAWI), a top body of hoteliers.

“Our clients still do not have the confidence as they still fear Covid-19 virus infection. We are getting hardly 30% of the business, but this will eventually improve with time,” said Sherry Bhatia, President, HRAWI.

The Maharashtra government allowed hotels and restaurants to reopen from October 5 after a gap of close to seven months. However, it restricted operation at 33 % capacity for Mumbai eateries and hotels and 50% for such businesses across the state in order to enforce social distancing norms deemed necessary to prevent the spread of Covid-19 infection.

“Since travelling is restricted, we have lost a big clientele in this bargain. In addition, since we are operating within 33-50% of total capacity, this is also impacting our business,” said Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, director, Pritam Hotels.

There are four lakh hotels and restaurants in Maharashtra, of which, barely 30% have resumed operation. One of the major problems is the acute shortage of staff, yet to return in adequate numbers after leaving the state at the height of the lockdown. Fewer outstation trains have added to the difficulty in the migrant worker’s return to the cities.