

HRAWI Thanks BMC For Withdrawing Notification Restricting Liquor Sale Post 11:30 PM In Restaurants

The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) has welcomed the BMC's move to withdraw a notification issued on the evening of the 5th of February restricting the sale of liquor at restaurants beyond 11:30 pm. The notification has been withdrawn effective the morning of the 6th Feb which has brought respite to restaurants and bars in the city. However, many restaurants expressed discontent over the last minute notification issued by the BMC which caused chaos, and disruption of last evening's business as well as a lot of confusion. Quite a few restaurants did not receive any official notification while others complained about having received the notification over WhatsApp and were unsure of its legitimacy. Based on information received from its restaurant members, the HRAWI sought clarification from the BMC and requested for withdrawing the notification with immediate effect.

“We are glad that the BMC understood the kind of disorder such last minute notifications can cause to the restaurant industry and withdrew last evening's notification restricting sale of liquor post 11:30 pm. We thank the Commissioner of the MCGM and the Principal Secretary Excise for expeditiously issuing a fresh notification withdrawing the restriction. The Hospitality industry has been struggling to stay afloat since the lockdown was implemented by the Government. The earlier notification would have just compounded to the industry's woes but by withdrawing it swiftly, the Government has instilled our faith back in it,” says Mr. Sherry Bhatia, President, HRAWI.

Three days ago, the Minister of Tourism – Shri Aaditya Thackeray had announced about the State's intention to kick-start nightlife in Mumbai by allowing restaurants to operate 24/7.

“It is difficult to understand the logic of making changes in the timings for service of liquor or food. How is that going to help control numbers? Are we saying that Coronavirus gets activated between 11:30 pm to 1:30 am? The earlier circular was issued on a Friday evening. This would've effectively killed

our weekend business. As it is, we are just coming out from a crisis, the worst we have seen in our lives, perhaps the worst ever. Weekday business is almost non-existent. Weekends are the only time we do any kind of business. Weekend business just helps us reduce our losses. To restrict operations at a time like this would be equivalent to killing us, however fortunately, the decision has been reversed and we are thankful to the Government, and the BMC for it and to the HRAWI for taking our issues to the top level” says a restaurateur.

“Lot of restaurateurs did not receive the notification informing about the restriction on liquor sale timing. We do not know how they had intended to reach out to all the restaurants at such a short notice. We are not even sure if the notification was effective immediately, i.e. last evening. We also come across cases where restaurants received the notification via WhatsApp. This is highly irregular and will open up scope for malicious and fake notices in this era of Photoshop and digitization. There is a sanctity to Government notifications. Procedures should be followed and notifications should be served through proper channels with adequate time for compliance. Also, in such cases there are enforcement activities by Government officials and ultimately restaurateurs suffer. We immediately appealed against the notice and presented the facts, and thankfully the notification has been withdrawn with immediate effect as per fresh circular issued this morning. We hope the implementing agencies have been also adequately informed. We thank the BMC and Excise departments for understanding our predicament and for immediately acting on it and taking back an order which would’ve hurt an already ailing industry even further,” concludes Mr Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, HRAWI spokesperson & Vice President, Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI).