

## **Stricter BMC norms for restaurant licences**

The BMC decided to take a relook at the norms for eateries after the Kamala Mills fire in December that started at Mojo's Bistro and spread to the adjoining 1Above resto-bar. The fire officer had issued an NOC to the resto-bar just a week before the tragedy under the new rooftop policy. Other BMC departments had failed to notice the irregularities, as they had not visited the premises.

In the aftermath of the Kamala Mills fire that left 14 dead, the BMC has finalized tougher guidelines for granting licences to eateries and asked its buildings and factory (B&F) department engineers to examine the legality of a structure before granting an NOC. Till the fire, engineers issued permissions without visiting the premises under the ease of doing business initiative. All permissions will be cleared within 15 days of the submission of an application if all compliances are in place. The BMC has also decided to request the state government to amend fire safety rules to allow for strong action against those who flout them.

B&F department officials would have to give their feedback to an application within 10 days of its submission or it would be "deemed as granted" and departmental action initiated against them. This is to ensure that officials do not indulge in corrupt practices by delaying permissions. Under the new policy, the BMC is making it mandatory for B&F, fire and health officials to inspect the premises physically before granting NOCs.

The tragedy forced the BMC to draw up a new proposal to make its officials accountable for irregularities by putting tougher inspection conditions, though, at the same time, ensuring these do not defeat the purpose of ease of doing business.