

Demand for nightlife hubs gets new push after 5 am nod for new year's eve

With new year's eve celebrations in Mumbai allowed till early morning in the past three years having gone off without a hitch, the campaign for nightlife hubs in the city has gathered fresh momentum. While hoteliers have advocated once again the creation of overnight entertainment zones, Shiv Sena leader Aaditya Thackeray has urged chief minister to clear legal obstacles in keeping bars, pubs and restaurants open 24x7 in the city's non-residential areas.

The state government had in December 2018 allowed liquor joints to stay open till 5am on new year's eve, a move that met with success without any law and order problems cropping up. The state had in 2015 given in-principal approval to the idea after the BMC gave its nod for it in 2014. The following year, the Bombay high court restrained the state from implementing the proposed move until the government looked into the safety of women, and the state responded by telling the court it was yet to take a decision in the matter. Later, in 2017, the state allowed shops and retailers to stay open 24x7 but bars, pubs and restaurants were kept out of the purview of the decision.

Hotel associations such as AHAR, the Federation of Hotels and Restaurants Associations of India (FHRAI) and Hotels and Restaurants Association Western India (HRAWI) had earlier recommended 18 non-residential pockets in Mumbai as 24x7 hubs. "But no formal proposal was drafted by the government," Pradeep Shetty of HRAWI said. "In the absence of a framework or any experiment in any area, the legislation has been delayed. It should be cleared now," AHAR president Santosh Shetty noted. Aaditya stated in his letter, "What is legal during the day cannot be illegal at night."