

Excise license fee relief: Industry hails SC order

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The hospitality industry has hailed the Supreme Court's interim order which states that the excise licence fee of FY 2021-22 for members who have paid 50 per cent fees will be protected and won't have to pay the additional 50 per cent demanded by the Maharashtra state Excise Department.

"We shall continue to exhaust our right to legal remedy before the SC to uphold the right of the associations to advocate the interests of members in the larger interest of the industry," said the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) which had ap-

proached the SC after the Bombay HC recently dismissed the petition and instead imposed a cost on the associations. The apex court has also granted a stay on the cost imposed on the

licence holders to pay 50 per cent of the fees pending the petition. However, we were surprised that when the matter was finally heard a couple of days ago, another Bench of the HC felt that the peti-

notice to the state to continue the previous interim order which was passed in favour of the industry," says Sherry Bhatia, president, HRAWI.

When contacted the senior officer from the state Excise Department refused to comment.

Maharashtra has around 10,500 hotels and 210,000 restaurants and over the last 24 months around 3,000 hotels and 60,000 restaurants have permanently shut down. Around 50 lakh employees, roughly 40 per cent directly engaged in the industry in the state lost their jobs. During the lockdown period, Maharashtra's hospitality industry has suffered a revenue loss of approximately Rs 5,000 cr monthly.

Owners of hotels and bars are facing severe difficulties in raising capital. We feel we are also entitled to all rights including rights under Article 14

-Pradeep Shetty, HRAWI senior VP

associations.

"Back in May 2021, the Hon'ble Bombay HC in view of the pandemic and the state-imposed lockdowns, had agreed to provide relief in the excise licence fee to the industry. It had allowed li-

tion was worthless and instead imposed a cost on the associations. So, we immediately approached the Hon'ble SC of which the hearing took place today and we are extremely pleased to inform you that the SC has issued a