

Meeting with Maha CM on Friday evening offers hope for restaurateurs

The clouds seem to have partially parted over the Maharashtra restaurant sector as a delegation met with the Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday August 6. All the associations from NRAI, HRAWI and AHAR attended the meeting with the Chief Minister along with the Chief Secretary, the Health Secretary and members of the Covid task force.

The delegates made the point to the authorities that while the restaurant industry understood the Covid protocols in the state, they did not understand the discriminatory policy of allowing shops and markets to open till 10 pm and not allowing restaurants, which were regulated spaces to stay open after 4 pm, he added. The point was also made that going beyond Mumbai, there were enough places in Maharashtra where cases were numbered in the 100s and lower and where malls had been allowed to open till 8 pm and still restaurants shut at 4 pm. The ultimate outcome of the meeting will only be clear on August 10, the day after the Chief Minister holds a high-level meeting to discuss the situation in the state and decide on opening times. He did say that the 10 pm opening time for markets was a trial and would also be examined in the very same meeting.

While a blanket lifting of curfew across the state will not be a possibility, since there are spots which continue to have worrying levels of infection, as a whole, there seems to be an assurance that the timings will be extended, maybe even till 10 pm. The restaurateurs who had planned to hit the road will now have to wait and see what Tuesday (August 10) holds for them, before planning what further action they would take.

The Hon'ble CM's words were reassuring and our hopes are now completely pinned on him. All the Hospitality Associations came together today for this meeting with the CM and apprised him of the ground reality. With shops now open until 10 pm, we made a case for restaurants timings to be eased as well. Various hardship faced by the industry were highlighted before the CM. The CM has assured that he will personally interact with the COVID19 Task force

in their next weekly meeting and explore ways for re-opening of restaurants. He has also assured the industry relief package for the tourism sector after the Government has dealt with the handling of the looming third wave,” says Mr. Pradeep Shetty, Sr. Vice President, Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI).

“Many other States in the country that have suffered a lot less in terms of lockdowns and restrictions, have announced relief measures for the tourism sector. However, the Maharashtra’s hospitality industry has so far not received any such relief. The Hospitality industry has been following all the SOPs and the mandated protocols. In comparison, the Associations pointed out to the CM the gross neglect of the aviation sector for fliers while being ferried from the airport to the aircraft and vice versa. The CM has acknowledged and shared the Government’s concerns over reopening of restaurant. He admitted to the fact that his Government was taking time and was aware of the industry’s plight. The doctors on the Task Force also have agreed to deliberate on all the suggestions made by the industry and assured to take the suggestions into consideration. The CM has assured a resolution as soon as possible,” added Mr. Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations Of India (FHRAI).