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## Pain Far from Over for Maha Hotels

Travel and other restrictions, 30% limit on room occupancy hurt business

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New Delhi: Hotels in Maharashtra have said that they are struggling with occupancies nearly one month after being allowed to operate in the state. They also expect a further hit to business as the state government has extended the lockdown till August 31. Hotel chains and industry associations said different rules in various cities across the state, curbs on interstate travel and other restrictions are not helping occupancy rates. They have also sought that the 30% limit on occupancy be raised to 40%.

"While we are thankful that the government has allowed hotels to operate at 30% capacity, the issue remains that there are still border controls and restraints in other states. Travel lines are not open. Until travel lines are opened, there won't be any guests. Pune and Thane have had lockdowns. Even within Maharashtra, travel is really low," said Gurbaiah Singh Kotli, president of the



Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI). The state government should consider increasing the cap from 30% to at least 40%, said Sanjay Sethi, managing director of Chalo! Hotels, which owns the JW Marriott — Mumbai, Novotel Pune, Four Points by Sheraton — Navi Mumbai, and Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel.

"For instance, in Mumbai we have a significant amount of bookings coming for repatriation flights, cruise liner employees and the medical com-

munity. However, the regular cases are restricted to 30% capacity. Once this ceiling is lifted, we should see better occupancies," he said. "We are in fact ready for opening at 100% capacity with all protocols in place."

The government should ease quarantine requirements for arrivals from network cities that pull business travellers into the region, he added. The state government allowed hotels and other accommodation providers to resume operations, with restricted entry and 30% capacity outside containment zones, from June 8.

Rattan Kishwani, deputy managing director of Lemon Tree Hotels, said occupancies have not gone up. "Our occupancies, whether it was Mumbai or Pune, have largely been dependent on quarantine rooms. Pune has been under a lockdown. So, whatever little business that was coming from some of the automobile companies for business travel was not there. Besides quarantining, regular business is very small. It's nothing to bank on," he said.