

THE HINDU

Restaurants gear up to ‘serve with safety’

Jayasimha K.R.

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To enable cashless transactions, some restaurants are planning to introduce a QR-code-based menu, ordering system and payment gateway. | Photo Credit: V Sreenivasa Murthy

Some claim to be taking measures over and above those prescribed by the government

After a gap of around 70 days, hotels and restaurants are gearing up to resume dine-in services from June 8. They have started putting in place systems and safety precautions in accordance with the Standard Operating Protocols (SOPs) issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

Arun Kumar Adiga of Vidyarthi Bhavan, an iconic restaurant in the city, hopes that patrons will return, but is bracing for fewer customers. “We have placed partitions on each table. The seating arrangements have been changed, as we are allowed to function at only 50% capacity. We will be upgrading our token and phone booking system,” he said, adding that managing crowds in the waiting area would be a challenge.

Mr. Adiga said that they have provided face shields to employees, who have also been given training as per Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) guidelines.

P.C. Rao, president of Bruhat Bangalore Hotels’ Association (BBHA), said that employees of hundreds of hotels and restaurants had undergone FSSAI mandated training and that they are prepared to “serve with safety”.

Restaurateurs claim that based on their capacity and requirements, they are taking measures over and above those prescribed by the government.

QR-code based menus

Taking cues from other sectors, restaurant owners are looking at ways to provide a 'near contact-less' experience, thereby reducing risk for patrons and staff. "With the aim of encouraging cashless transactions and direct ordering, we are planning to introduce a QR-code-based menu, ordering system and payment gateway," said Mr. Rao.

Another hotelier plans to introduce a token system and phone reservations. "Patrons should continue to adhere to safety guidelines, including keeping a safe distance, avoid gatherings, and wearing masks when possible," said one restaurant-owner.

Foot-operated washbasins

Establishments are also thinking of installing foot-operated washbasins. According to Chandrashekar Hebbar, president of Karnataka Pradesh Hotel and Restaurants' Association (KPHRA), most hotels and restaurants have commercial dishwashers, which are safe. "We will give more emphasis to sterilisation and hot water immersion of cutlery," he said.

Trial runs in malls

Many malls and shopping complexes, which are set to open on Monday, have been conducting trial runs for their staff.

"We taken all safety measures and trained our staff regarding maintaining alternate slots and safe distancing on escalators, and cleaning procedures and practices," said T.G. Vinod of Elements Mall.

The Shopping Centres Association of India (SCAI) had issued comprehensive guidelines on measures to be taken.

"As members of SCAI, we have taken measure over and above prescribed in the guidelines and SOPs issued by the Union government. Rebuilding confidence in people is important. Such steps are inevitable," Mr. Vinod added.

However, managers at retail outlets for non-essential items wonder if they will actually be able to make any sale given that pay cuts are fast becoming the norm.

Places of worship

All places of worship will open to the public from Monday, but guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare must be strictly implemented, senior officers in the State government said. These include a ban on large gatherings, distribution of prasad, holy water, and choirs or singing by groups.

People will have to maintain a distance of six feet from each other while standing in queues. Staggered entry and exit of devotees, mandatory masks, use of hand sanitisers and thermal screening at entrances are some of the other measures that have to be followed.

“Managing crowds at pilgrimage centres will be tough. But we will implement social distancing, which essentially means not as many people as those who used to have darshan before lockdown can have darshan in a day now,” said a senior official.