

21.1.2022

Shri Ajay Kumar Bhalla,
Hon. Secretary,
Ministry of Home Affairs,
Government of India.

Subject: RAI appeal seeking your intervention to urgently withdraw the weekend curfew and not impose further curfews/lockdown in Delhi.

Reference: Delhi Order No.F.60/DDMA/COVID-19/2021/Vol.-II/514, dated 21.01.2022

Hon'ble Secretary,

Greetings from the Retailers Association of India (RAI)!

Sir, RAI is the apex body of retailers in India, having around 13667 member establishments, including large and small retailers, having approximately 500,000 stores providing direct & indirect employment to 50 million Indians. We appreciate the Government for the proactive measures, it is taking towards containment, control, and prevention of the spread of COVID-19.

Sir, this representation concerns the Delhi Government Order No.F.60/DDMA/COVID-19/2021/Vol.-II/514, dated 21.01.2022 reports which mention the restrictions imposed in the State will continue, i.e. Weekend lockdown, curfews, shutting restaurant dine-in, and odd-even opening of shops. Sir, these restrictions are distressing for retail businesses like shops, restaurants, and malls as it has restrictions akin to a partial lockdown. While the revival of the economy had just started, these lockdown-like restrictions have resulted in the retailers once again fighting for their survival.

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns and on and off restrictions over the last two years have taken a heavy toll on the economy leading to business closures and unemployment. A lot has changed since the pandemic first came to India. Both the citizens and the administrations have learned better ways of dealing with the pandemic and its iterations.

The COVID strain has changed and the number of people vaccinated has dramatically increased. Considering that the need for hospitalization is significantly lower in the case of Omicron infection as compared to earlier variants, the number of hospitalizations should be the criterion to consider because of the pressure it puts on the healthcare system. This has been successfully adopted and implemented by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), which uses the number of asymptomatic patients, number of hospitalizations, number of oxygenated beds occupied, and number of discharged patients daily as the basis for determining restrictions. This is an accurate measure of the situation as it helps give a realistic picture and avoids panic among citizens while also ensuring business continuity.

Restrictions such as weekend curfews and restricted operating time for stores worsen the financial strain on businesses and lead to overcrowding, beating the purpose of such measures. A more suitable step is a better reinforcement of the COVID appropriate behavior in public places like wearing masks, proper sanitization, and social distancing.

Keeping in view the definite dip in cases and hospitalization rate in Delhi since the last week, we seek your urgent intervention and request you to instruct the Delhi government to look at the scenario objectively and lift weekend curfews, the odd-even system in markets, and open restaurants for dine-in. This will help maintain the balance between lives and livelihoods. Continuing with adhoc will only result in the shutting of businesses, eventually leading to job losses.

Sir, we hope you will consider our appeal and instruct the Delhi Government to withdraw the restrictions imposed in the State. We assure you of our constant support in the fight against COVID-19.

Warm Regards,
For and on Behalf of Retailers Association of India,



Gautam Jain,
Director – Finance & Advocacy.

Cc:

1. **Shri Anil Agrawal**, Hon. Additional Secretary – DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.