

Star certificates no longer mandatory for hotel licences, states FSSAI

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In a big relief to the hotels industry, the apex food regulator has decided that submission of star certificates issued by the Ministry of Tourism is not mandatory for the issuance or renewal of licenses. In place of the certificate, the hotels now can submit a declaration, regardless of whether they are starred or not, for their FSSAI licenses.

However, the order added that hotels having a claimed star certificate shall have to submit the same, while FSSAI will not insist on a certificate from establishments that do not have a certificate, and the declaration will be accepted.

The order said, "It has been decided that hotel FBOs (food business operators) shall upload on the online food licensing and registration system a declaration stating whether they are a star or a non-star hotel."

"In case of star hotel, they have to submit star certificate issued by the Ministry of Tourism. In case of non-star hotels, the declaration to this effect will be accepted, and the licensing authority will not insist on a certificate of star rating," it added.

"All licensing authorities have been directed to process the application of fresh or renewal of licenses of hotels accordingly," added the order signed by Parveen Jargar, joint director, regulatory compliance, FSSAI.

It was brought to the notice of FSSAI that licensing authorities were insisting to produce certificate of ratings, even from small or tiny hotels, at the time of applying for fresh licenses or renewal of their licenses, and as a result, the hotel industry is facing difficulty in getting licenses for hotels.

The order said, "As per the licensing criteria, hotels with rating of five stars and above require Central licenses and hotels with rating four and below with turnover above Rs 12 lakh require state licenses. And it is clarified that criteria for hotels for state licenses include both star category hotels (one-star to four-star) as well as non-star category hotels, including all those hotels that have not opted for star rating."

It added that certificate of star rating to the hotels by the Ministry of Tourism was a voluntary programme, and many hotels did not opt for this certification.

While speaking on the rating system, Tahir Sufi, professor and head, Department of Hospitality Management of Graphic Era (deemed to be university), said, "The star rating system in India is a purely voluntary system."

"Hotels that get classified have been offered several incentives to make the classification scheme attractive. However, the star ratings should not have been made mandatory for issuing the food license in the first place, as less than 2,000 hotels are classified in India," he added.

"At the same time, there are lakhs of hotels without star ratings. However, the correct decision has been taken by the food licensing authorities to issue licenses to small and unclassified hotels without star ratings," Sufi added.