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**As the city heals from the Mudpipe Café fire, 21 pubs have their doors closed, altering Bangalore's nightlife landscape**

Blind Gopal Rao

**A**s the shocking aftermath of last week's fire incident at Koramangala's Mudpipe Café continues to haunt the collective memory of Bangaloreans, the BBMP has taken swift action, closing 21 pubs and restaurants in the city. It has also sent notices to 167 others for various violations, including those concerning fire safety regulations.

The municipality team has cited lack of hygiene, improper waste disposal, non-compliance with public and fire safety guidelines and running rooftop establishments without permission as some of the reasons behind the order.

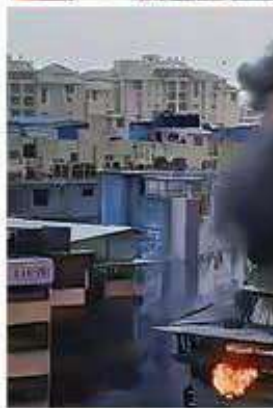
Among those that have been ordered to close include the Heart Breaker Pub and MRP in Bommanahalli, Lit Lounge café and Writers Cafe on HBR Layout, Café 23 on Outer Ring Road, Chugg Gastro Bar on Church Street and various bars and restaurants in the south and west zones.

### The Impact

Traditionally, regulatory compliance has not been the primary focus for investors and entrepreneurs when opening bars, pubs, or restaurants. However, this recent fire mishap has certainly brought some much-needed attention to this crucial aspect of the industry.

"One of the immediate impacts of these actions is the closure of a significant number of establishments and the consequent reduction in options for consumers seeking nightlife venues. It also sends a clear message to the industry that non-compliance with vital regulations - especially, those related to safety and hygiene - will not be tolerated. As a result, we are likely to see a heightened awareness and emphasis on

adhering to these regulations across the board," says Zain Khwaja, CEO of U.S. PIZZA. V Mohan Kumar, Managing Director of Jupiter Hospitality, adds, "Guests are now more likely to patronise restaurants and pubs that demonstrate a commitment to safety and possess visible fire safety standards. Following this tragic incident,



patrons will be more discerning, choosing venues where the risk of such incidents is less and advanced technology is in place to handle emergencies."

### Waning Standards

It's crucial to highlight that a significant number of renowned brands had somewhat relaxed their standards in the aftermath of the COVID-19 restrictions. The Koramangala incident now acts as a wake-up call, compelling these establishments to revisit and enhance their operational protocols and standards.

"Consumers might be initially surprised to learn that some of their favourite restaurants or bars may not have been as hygienic as they assumed. However, discovering and addressing these issues is far preferable to the alternative - wondering which meal from which place

caused yesterday's stomach upset. In the context of public health, it is better to have the assurance that regulatory bodies are actively monitoring and enforcing compliance to protect the well-being of patrons," explains Khwaja.

### Lessons to be Learnt

There are valuable lessons to be drawn from these regulatory issues that can apply to the industry as a whole. The primary lesson is one of constant vigilance.

Seema Kapur, a media professional who visits restaurants every weekend, says, "I think it is very important for restaurants to pay attention to safety as we visit them regularly. I would be worried if I had to be thinking if I was safe in a restaurant where I have come to chill with my friends."

All too often, in various restaurant settings, standard operating procedures are either shortened or disregarded entirely due to the assumption that no one is actively watching. This is an understandable but problematic mindset.

To address this challenge, there are two essential strategies that restaurants, particularly chained ones, can employ. "Establish a robust system of checks and balances within the organisation. This system should include an adequate number of administrative personnel responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance. It is also vital to ensure that even those tasked with supervision are themselves monitored. This approach promotes accountability and helps prevent lapses in adherence to essential regulations and standards," says Khwaja.

### Review and Monitor

The second thing is to keep a close eye on customer feedback and reviews. Many companies now offer platforms that not only aggregate reviews from various sources but also provide insights into customer sentiment trends.

For instance, if there is a sudden surge in negative reviews citing service issues at a particular outlet, it is imperative to identify and address the root causes promptly.

"All restaurants and pubs must have a quarterly and monthly check on all emergency equipment. Brands also need to have strict training for handling such incidents for all staff members. It is also best to have a fire safety checklist and team members who ensure all points are taken care of," says Kumar.

Real-time feedback analysis enables proactive issue resolution, thereby maintaining the brand's reputation and customer trust.