

Kerala imposes Section 144 for a month due to rising covid-19 cases

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Ernakulum: The Kerala government has imposed Section 144 of the Cr.PC across the state for a month, starting Saturday, in the wake of rising coronavirus cases.

From reporting zero fresh cases for multiple days in recent months, the state now has the second highest rate of increase in covid-19 cases and the third-highest number of active cases -- 72,339 -- as of Thursday evening.

Section 144 bans the assembly of more than five persons. Effectively, the Thursday night order will put a pause on social and political gatherings that had emerged as a major challenge to control the spread in September. District magistrates have been asked to make necessary arrangements to implement the order thoroughly, apart from continuing to seal off containment zones where the virus is spreading rapidly.

The government order said the curfew-like conditions will not apply to office-goers, businesses and markets. It limits the relaxations provided by the latest phase of 'Unlock' measures, which allowed gatherings of up to 100 people outside hotspots and gave conditional permission to open movie theatres from 1 October.

The Kerala government issued the order after it decided to avoid a total shutdown to curb covid cases after an all-party meet this week. The state's total confirmed cases doubled in September and crossed 2 lakh on Thursday. It is the ninth state in India to cross two-lakh cases mark.

While the state has increased testing, with 59,157 samples being tested on Thursday, its positivity rate has been steady for the last few weeks at 13.7%, as per government data. At 771, Kerala's death toll is also comparatively lower than other states with a high case burden.