

Covid-19 curbs in West Bengal extended till Aug 15 with more relief

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The West Bengal government on Thursday extended the existing COVID-19 restrictions in the state till August 15 with some more relaxations, one of the being the permission to reopen cinema halls with not more than 50 per cent occupancy.

The state has also given its nod for organising government programmes indoors, provided the number of seats is trimmed down to 50 per cent of the original capacity, according to an official order issued in the morning.

Buses, taxis, auto-rickshaws have been allowed to operate with 50 per cent occupancy.

Offices, both government and private, have been asked to function with half the manpower, the order said.

All district administrations, police commissionerates and local authorities will have to comply with the government-issued directives, the order said.

"Any violation of the restriction measures will be liable to be proceeded against as per the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and relevant sections of the IPC," it added.

Later in the day, in yet another order, the government allowed cinema halls to resume business with strict adherence to COVID-19 protocols.

Meanwhile, the Eastern India Motion Pictures Association, which represents distributors and producers, welcomed the government's decision and said "it would rekindle hopes of the ailing industry".

"Happy that chief minister Mamata Banerjee listened to our pleas to reopen the halls," Satadeep Saha, owner of a singlescreen and a local multiplex chain, said.

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