

Restaurants and spas to remain shut; some offices may ask staff to return in Maharashtra

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MUMBAI: Despite the Centre allowing malls, hotels and restaurants, and religious places to be opened from June 8 as part of an "unlock" plan, Maharashtra has not given them a go-ahead yet. Barber shops, spas and parlours too will continue to remain shut, as per guidelines issued by the state on Sunday. Officials said separate guidelines and SOPs for re-opening these sectors will follow in time.

Among other restrictions still in place until June 30 are those that apply to travel. While buses and local trains continue to remain off-bounds for non-essential workers, inter-district travel between, say Mumbai and Thane, is also barred.

Citizens will also be stopped from travelling long distances for non-essential purchases or use vehicles for going shopping.

Group activities and indoor stadium activities continue to remain prohibited although some outdoor pursuits such as jogging or cycling will be allowed, provided it is restricted to neighbourhood spaces.

As for commercial activity, shops will be held responsible for enforcement of social distancing.

For instance, cloth shops will have to keep their trial rooms locked.

Return or exchange of items will not be allowed. Shopkeepers will be encouraged to use home delivery or a token system to avoid crowding at billing counters.

Return to work?

The private sector is likely to tread cautiously on the state government's nod to allow up to 10% of office staff to return to work from June 8. Given that there is still rapid growth in Covid-19 cases in the state, not all organisations are in a hurry to bring employees back to office. Some organisations are expected to continue with the current arrangement of work from home (WFH).

Vikram Shroff, head HR laws (employment & labour), Nishith Desai Associates, said: "Our law firm has decided to continue to work from home, notwithstanding the unlockdown. Some teams have been more productive during the last couple of months, and with the rains expected to lash Mumbai soon, WFH is also easier and safer."

Among large corporates, RPG Enterprises will allow 10% of its employees back to work from June 8 in line with the government notification. The group will gradually increase this to around 30% depending on the government advisory at that time, an official said.