

Buses, autos and cabs likely to resume; Metro shut till May 31

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Passengers can travel from one state to another once states, union territories mutually agree upon it. (ANI)

The Centre on Sunday said that state governments may allow the operation of public buses, auto-rickshaws and private cabs during the fourth phase of the nationwide lockdown till May 31. However Metro services will remain shut, as per the guidelines to the states issued by the Union home ministry on Sunday.

The Delhi government will come up with an exhaustive list of what is allowed and what is not, based on the Centre's guidelines, on Monday.

As per the MHA guidelines, the states may also allow inter-state passenger vehicles and buses, provided the governments concerned agree upon it. This could help thousands of migrant workers, who were stuck in the national Capital despite trying to reach their home towns over the last few weeks, and those who have not been able to cross the borders.

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“Inter-state movement of passenger vehicles and buses, with mutual consent of the state/UT (Union Territory) involved will be allowed. Intra-state movement of passenger vehicles and buses will also be permitted, as decided by the states and UT,” the order issued by the union ministry of home affairs read.

Delhi's transport minister Kailash Gahlot said that the Delhi government had, in its list of recommendations to the Centre, said that they were prepared to resume public transport services in the city, with safety precautions in place to protect against the Covid-19 infection.

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“The Delhi government will issue orders in this regard on Monday. However, I have had a detailed meeting with the top government officials and transport infrastructure experts to discuss a standard operation procedure (SOP) for safe operations. We are completely ready to resume operations,” Gahlot said.

The Delhi government is yet to issue an order detailing how the Centre's guidelines will be implemented in the city.

Officials of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said that they will abide by the government directions.

“In light of the extension of lockdown issued by the government, Metro services will remain closed for commuters till May 31. Our helpline service 155370 shall also not be available,” the DMRC said in a statement on Sunday.

While the Centre issued these relaxations, it has also allowed state governments to impose stricter lockdown rules at their discretion. This means that the public buses will ply in the city, but with passenger restrictions, Delhi government officials said.

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“We are waiting for a final order from the state government, but buses are all set to be allowed to ply with not more than 20 passengers at a time. There will also be marshals deployed at the entry and exit of buses to ensure that there is no crowding inside the buses,” a senior DTC official said.

The Delhi government, in its list of recommendations to the Centre on Friday, had also suggested passenger limitations in cabs and auto-rickshaws. In private cabs, including app-based cab aggregator services such as Ola and Uber, only two passengers besides the driver are allowed, and auto-rickshaw drivers were allowed to ply with only one passenger.

Delhi's cab driver associations, welcoming the possible relaxations, said the government must also ensure a mechanism to ensure passengers are not symptomatic. “There should be some mechanism like a health certificate that the passenger needs to show before he/she is allowed to board a cab. The health of the drivers is also at stake,” said Sanjay Samrat, Delhi Taxi Tourist Transporters' Association.