

Haryana directs schools in 5 districts to shut till March 31; in UP, till 22nd

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GURGAON, MARCH 13

A DAY after schools and colleges in Delhi were directed to remain shut in light of a surge in cases of coronavirus, the Haryana government Friday made a similar announcement directing all colleges in the state and all government and private schools in five districts to remain closed until March 31.

"In view of a surge in cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the neighbouring state, the Department of School Education, Haryana, has decided that all government schools as well as private schools in Sonapat, Rohtak, Jhajjar, Faridabad and Gurugram districts will remain closed till 31.03.2020 with immediate effect, except for holding examinations," states the order issued by Dr Mahavir Singh, principal secretary to the Haryana government, School Education Department, Chandigarh.

"Students will attend school only to take board exams, annual exams and assessment exams as per previous schedule. However, all teaching and non-teaching staff members will attend school as usual," it states, adding that schools in the remaining districts "shall function as per normal schedule".

In another order issued Friday, the Deputy Director Cadet Corps for Director General Higher Education, Haryana, has similarly directed that "all universities and colleges situated in Haryana will



Many schools are exploring the option of online classes

be closed till March 31, 2020, as a precautionary measure".

The UP government too ordered closure of educational institutions till March 22. "All schools, colleges, technical and vocational educational institutes in Uttar Pradesh will remain closed till March 22. We will review the situation on March 22 and decide whether or not to extend it," said UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

The directions from the Haryana government came even as educational institutions, in the absence of any directions from the state government, had started taking decisions to suspend classes on their own. At many schools in Gurgaon, officials said classes will continue online.

Manisha Malhotra, Principal of The Shri Ram School, Moulisari, said: "This is the term-end period, so only students who are giving

board examinations are coming to school. The new term was to start on March 23, with orientation on March 20. We have decided to do all that online, and school is shut till March 31. However, we will be conducting classes online through Zoom."

At the Heritage Xperiential Learning School, similarly, classes had been suspended since March 9 but the institution has been using "virtual learning programs" to continue lessons. "We have been working on flipping classrooms, setting up learning management systems and establishing online teaching and learning for almost three years now," said Principal Neena Kaul.

"In our initial runs of our virtual learning programme this week, we have had some wonderful feedback from parents," she added.

At Shalom Hills International School, Principal Atul Bhatt said, "Classes have been suspended for almost 10 days now as a precaution. Only exams are being conducted. There are no gatherings, assemblies or prayers. All parent-teacher meetings and results are being conveyed online."

At the Blue Bells Group of Schools, meanwhile, officials said classes have been suspended, along with assemblies, trips, events, and any other planned gatherings. The school had also, in the last few days, placed alcohol-based sanitisers at all entries of the schools and medical rooms.

Meanwhile, private schools in Gauram Budh Nagar are drawing action plans to maintain academic continuity in the wake of the closure.

An official from Shri Nadar school said, "Classes are being conducted online. Every measure is being taken to protect students and avoid gatherings. We have also experimented with online examinations for non-board classes in which a Google form with MCQs was mailed to students. Several other virtual strategies are being drawn to ensure course is completed on time."

For some private schools, the closure has coincided with the scheduled break. "The school just got over with exams and will start its new session from April. We will review the situation and take steps accordingly," said an official from GD Goenka School in Greater Noida.

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GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

Checklists from Red Cross, WHO

The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), Unicef and the World Health Organization (WHO) have issued new guidance to help protect children and schools from transmission of the Covid-19 virus. The guidance provides critical considerations and practical checklists to keep schools safe. It also advises national and local authorities on how to adapt and implement emergency plans for educational facilities.