

Govt cap on schoolbags

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Calcutta: The Bengal government on Friday said the weight of a student's schoolbag in government and aided schools "should not exceed 10% of the child's body weight".

The education department issued a chart prescribing schoolbag weight according to a child's class and ideal body weight.

■ At the pre-primary level, where the average body weight of a child is between 10kg and 16kg, there should be "no bag", the order states

■ For Classes I and II, where the average body weight ranges from 16kg to 22kg, schoolbags should weigh between 1.6kg and 2.2kg

■ For students in Classes IX and X, bags should weigh between 2.5kg and 4.5kg

■ For Classes XI and XII, the range is 3.5kg to 5kg.

The order says heavy schoolbags are a cause of

"backache in schoolchildren".

"A heavy bag may cause a child to... strain muscles in the neck, shoulder and back... Various international organisations have recommended the weight of the school bag in relation to the body weight from time to time," the guidelines state.

An education department official said the Union education ministry had constituted an expert committee on schoolbags, and Bengal's new policy was framed on the basis of its recommendations.

In January 2019, the Mamata Banerjee government had announced a policy aimed at reducing the burden of heavy schoolbags by introducing lockers for students from Nursery to Class VIII in 122 state-funded institutions.

"Students now leave their textbooks and exercise books in lockers," an education department official said.

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Schoolbag

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“Their bags are lighter if they do not have to carry all books to school and back home every day,” said the official.

“The new policy is more exhaustive and is expected to reduce the load,” said Krishnangshu Mishra, president of the West Bengal Headmasters’ Association.

The guidelines also lay down limits on homework. No homework should be assigned to students of Classes I and II. For Classes III to V, homework should not exceed two hours a week. Students in Classes VI to VIII should get no more than one hour of homework a day, while the limit for Classes IX to XII has been fixed at two hours a day.
