

Yoga push wobbles govt employees' weekend

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Calcutta: A state government order has made it compulsory for employees to perform yoga early on Sunday morning, whether at Red Road, Milan Mela, government offices or their "place of stay".

Many state government employees, still accustomed to a holiday-heavy calendar under the Mamata Banerjee government, sounded rattled by the order.

A June 14 communication from Bengal chief secretary Manoj Agarwal states: "It has been decided that all officers and employees, including permanent, contractual, part-time, daily-wage/casual workers, outsourced personnel, and personnel engaged on honorarium basis of the State Government, PSUs, autonomous

bodies, and local bodies shall observe the occasion by participating in the programme on 21.06.2026 from 6.30am to 7.45am from their respective offices/place of stay/Red Road & Milan Mela, if nominated."

It adds: "All Heads of Departments, Divisional Commissioners, District Magistrates, and other Heads of Offices shall ensure participation of all personnel as detailed above without fail."

The order has left many employees scrambling to adjust plans.

A state government employee from Baruipur in South 24-Parganas, who works in central Calcutta, said reaching office at such an early hour would be "nearly impossible".

"I am planning to spend Saturday night at a friend's place and go to the office from there on Sunday. But the compulsory attendance order is



absurd," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the primary architect of the International Yoga Day initiative, will lead the main celebrations on Red Road this year following the BJP forming a government in Bengal. Smaller events have been planned across the state, from Cooch Behar to Kakdwip.

In Delhi, attendance rules are less stringent. Government employees are not required to participate compulsorily. At the inaugural Yoga Day in 2015, officers above the rank of under-secretary, mostly IAS officers, were "requested" to attend physical events, an official said. The practice has continued.

A member of the Sangrami Joutho Mancha, a coalition of state government employees, said there was a "communication gap" in the order.

"It mentions place of stay,

EARLY BIRD DRILL	
Usually at Nabanna 10.15am At Nabanna, employees are required to report by 10.15am on working days. Official working hours are from 10.15am to 5.15pm. A biometric attendance system is in place at the state secretariat.	
Sunday, June 21 6.30am The chief secretary's International Yoga Day notice for Sunday states, "all officers and employees... shall observe the occasion by participating in the programme... from 6.30am to 7.45am."	

which suggests employees can participate from home as well. But it does not clarify whether those joining from home must send videos to their seniors. Nor does it mention transport arrangements. Ideally, a press conference should clarify these doubts," said the public works department employee.

Sources in the administra-

tion said departmental heads were expected to nominate employees for physical participation at their workplace.

"Bengal has over 8 lakh permanent government employees. Including others mentioned in the order, the number exceeds 15 lakh. It is not possible for all to report to offices on a Sunday. Departments will organise participa-

tion of a section of employees at workplaces, while others are expected to join from home," a source said.

However, uncertainty persists among employees. An assistant professor at a government college in Hooghly said she would leave her Kasba residence at 5am on Sunday. "My husband will drive me to college. The government should have allowed flexibility. Participation that is imposed from above cannot be called spontaneous," she said.

A communication sent by the commissioner of the local civic body to a college in Hooghly also mentioned a dress code for students and teachers. They should wear "white T-shirts or white kurtis and black or blue trousers or track pants", it stated.

Complicating matters further is Jamai Sasthi on Saturday, one of Bengal's well-loved

occasions where sons-in-law are honoured, mostly gastronomically. A Sunday after the feast would have been ideal, but for the grand double-engine government's plan for Yoga Day.

Jamai Sasthi was a state holiday during Mamata Banerjee's tenure.

An employee at the New Secretariat, who lives in North 24-Parganas, had planned a short trip to a riverside resort with her husband and mother. "I might have to cancel the trip. It is frustrating," she said.

An official at the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, who is unmarried, said he was struggling with attendance planning. "For the past few years, Jamai Sasthi has been a holiday. This time there is no notification. On top of that, mandatory attendance on Sunday has made things difficult," he said.