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# Indian State to Close Bombay Dance Bars

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India's Maharashtra state has decided to shut down more than 600 dancing-girl bars

Dance bar workers listen to speech at rally to protest state government's decision to close dance bars

in the western city of Bombay. Authorities say the bars have a bad influence on society, but the dancing girls are threatening protests to save their jobs.

Every night tens of thousands of girls dressed in colorful costumes sway to such popular film tunes as customers shower them with money at hundreds of dance bars in Bombay. These bars are among the most popular night-time attractions in India's sprawling entertainment and commercial hub.

But state authorities have ordered them to shut down, two weeks after nearly 650 similar establishments in the rest of the state were told to close.

Authorities say these bars corrupt youth, threaten local culture and have become hubs for prostitution and crime.

But compared with those in many other cities in the world, these dance bars are sedate. The girls remain fully clothed throughout the performance and customers are prohibited from touching the dancers.

Maharashtra's deputy chief minister, R.R. Patil, says the bars are only licensed to operate as restaurants and are being misused. He says strict laws are being drafted to prohibit dance bars and offenders will not be able to ask for bail.

But the bar owners are threatening a bitter fight.

The president of the Bombay Bar Owners Association, Manjit Singh says they will not take the order lying down.

Mr. Singh says they will challenge the government in court and take to the streets. He says the government must understand it cannot crush an industry in this manner.

The approximately 70,000 girls working at these bars throughout Maharashtra state are equally determined to wage a battle to save their livelihood.

One of the dancers, Seema told television news channels that the government's decision was unfair.

Seema says the authorities should not take such a step after she has spent half her life dancing in these bars.

Even women's rights activists have come out in support, saying many of the girls here are the only breadwinners in their families, and may be forced into prostitution by the government's decision.



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