

## **Punjab CM extends night curfew to entire state as coronavirus cases surge**

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With Punjab witnessing a surge in coronavirus cases, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Wednesday announced extension of night curfew to the entire state and ordered a ban on political gatherings.

Singh said those violating the ban on political gatherings, including leaders, will be booked under the Disaster Management Act and the Epidemics Diseases Act.

The chief minister said night curfew from 9 pm to 5 am, which was till now imposed in 12 districts, will be extended to all 22 districts of the state.

As part of the fresh curbs, the number of people who can attend funerals and weddings has been reduced to 50 people indoors and 100 for outdoors.

Wearing masks has been made mandatory for all government employees while in office, an official statement said here while detailing the fresh set of restrictions imposed as the number of COVID-19 cases continued to remain high in the state.

These restrictions, coupled with the ones imposed earlier, which include closure of schools and educational institutions, shall remain effective till April 30.

However, there was some respite for shop owners in malls, as the chief minister allowed entry of 10 people per shop at any given time, as against the earlier order of not allowing more than 100 people in the entire mall at one time. This would imply that 200 people will be allowed in a mall with 20 shops at any given time, said the statement.

Punjab had on Tuesday reported 62 more fatalities due to COVID-19, pushing the toll to 7,216 while the state had witnessed 2,924 more coronavirus cases, taking the infection tally to 2,57,057.

The chief minister, in his weekly review of the COVID-19 situation, expressed concern at the high positivity and mortality rates in the state.

He said it was a matter of concern that over 85 percent of cases in Punjab are of the UK strain, which is more contagious and virulent.

He said he had no option but to go in for stricter measures to further control the ongoing surge, even though the number of positive cases had somewhat stabilised in the last few days due to curbs imposed earlier.