

Odisha bans gatherings during Durga Puja; extends night curfew-Details here

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In the view of possible third COVID wave, Odisha government prohibited gatherings during the upcoming Durga Puja festivals. It also increased night curfew timings in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar by an additional two hours during the celebrations.

There will be graded unlocking throughout the state from 5 AM on October 1 till 5 AM on November 1, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) P K Jena informed on Thursday.

He said the decision to prohibit congregations during festivals was taken as per the directive of the Union Health Ministry.

"Congregations for Durga Puja will not be allowed. It has been observed that unrestricted religious celebration by large gatherings led to a rise in infection rates in some parts of the country."

"Night curfew will continue to be imposed in all urban areas from 10 PM to 5 AM, but it will be in effect from 8 PM to 5 AM in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack from October 11-20," he said.

A ban has been put in place on the sale of firecrackers in October, as a result of which Ravan Podi celebrations will be cancelled.

Weekend shutdowns will cease to exist

The SRC also mentioned that weekend shutdowns will cease to exist. All types of business establishments will remain open across Odisha from 5 AM to 10 PM barring Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. In these two cities, the timing for the same will be 5 AM to 8 PM. Essential services will continue to be allowed during night curfew.

Despite a dip in COVID cases in the state, the SRC said that it has been noticed that people often congregate with family and friends during festivities defying COVID protocols.

"The Centre has asked the state governments to observe all previous guidelines issued during the festive season in the next two-three months and we have decided to comply with the advice."

"If people exhibit COVID appropriate behaviour in the coming weeks, we can win this war against the infection," he added.

(With inputs from agencies)