

Mumbai alters Covid guidelines; prior permissions must for gatherings of over 200. Details here

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Updating its Covid-19 guidelines, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has now made it mandatory to take prior permission for any program or event to be attended by 200 or more people in the city, reported news agency PTI.

As per a circular issued on Monday, the permission of the local assistant municipal commissioner will be required for such programs or functions, in view of the increasing cases of the Omicron coronavirus variant.

Further, local ward officers should send their "representatives" to check if rules related to Covid-19 appropriate behaviour are being followed strictly at such programs, the BMC said.

The circular said that if the owner, hotelier or organisers claim that their venue has the capacity to accommodate more than 200 persons even after following Covid-19-related norms and ensuring 6 ft by 6 ft distance between individuals, prior written permission of the assistant municipal commissioner must be obtained.

Further, closed (indoor) halls can operate at 50% of their total capacity, while open-to-sky venues shall operate at only 25 per cent of total capacity. Violation of these guidelines will attract action under the IPC and Disaster Management Act, 2005, the circular stated.

This comes almost a month after the Maharashtra government announced that no special permission would be necessary for gatherings of less than 1,000 people.

Earlier, BMC commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal had appealed to citizens to avoid gatherings and parties during the upcoming Christmas festival and New Year as more Omicron cases get detected.

In a press release issued on Sunday, Chahal said due to the new virus variant Omicron, the situation at many countries in the world has once again gone out of control and has created a lockdown-like situation.

He said despite repeated appeals by the government and administration to prevent a possible third wave of Covid-19, the guidelines are not being followed properly in most places - especially at wedding ceremonies and other functions.

Chahal asked citizens to strictly adhere to rules regarding attendance at weddings and other functions.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra on Tuesday detected 11 new cases of Omicron variant, taking the cumulative tally to 65.