

## Odisha relaxes Covid curbs, bans Holi celebrations in public. Details

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The Odisha government on Monday prohibited the celebration of Holi in public places and also large gatherings during different festivals.

The state has withdrawn night curfew from February 18, 2022.

In an order, the Chief Secretary said Holi and their related rituals shall not be observed in public places throughout the state.

"People may celebrate 'Holi' with family members in their houses only and not in any public places including public roads," the order said.

During celebration of 'Dola Purnima', the order added, people shall ensure Covid appropriate behaviour such as physical distancing, use of face mask and hand wash.

In regard to celebration of Mahashivratri, Holi, Dolapurnima, the order said that the local authorities would ensure proper adherence to the Covid appropriate protocols.

During Dola festival, people as per tradition take out procession carrying the idols of Radha and Krishna for worship following which Holi is celebrated.

The state government has allowed religious rituals but Collectors and Municipal Commissioners may impose appropriate restriction if required in Dola Melan's.

The district authorities will also determine the number of participants in these gatherings with strict adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour and norms.

Further mela or congregations outside and within the temple premises may also be reasonably restricted so as to avoid mass gatherings, it said.

Considering local conditions, District Magistrates/Municipal Commissioners may impose appropriate restrictions on entry of devotees into temples and religious places of worship.

The order said that there shall be graded unlocking throughout the state with effect from 5 AM of 1 March, 2022 till 5 AM of 31 March, 2022.

During the unlock period, all activities are allowed to fully functional.

All social and religious gatherings are also allowed with strict adherence to Covid protocols.

Referring to the announcement of the election for Urban Local Bodies, the order said that political gatherings/meetings for any election to be announced by the appropriate Election Commission shall be allowed. Marriages, thread ceremony and related gathering with approval from local authorities shall be allowed with a ceiling of 500 persons (for the entire event) including hosts, guests, and catering and other support staff.

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Funerals, last rites and related gatherings allowed with approval from local authorities shall be allowed with a ceiling of 250 persons. It said that under no circumstances, the number of participants shall exceed the ceiling for the entire event.

Marriage processions shall be allowed with due prior written approval from competent authorities subject to the ceiling 100 participants.

With inputs from PTI