

Odisha- SEC withdraws all COVID curbs for urban local body poll campaigns

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- **The decision was taken as the COVID situation improved in Odisha. However, restrictions might be re-imposed if cases soar again.**

All COVID-19 restrictions on campaigns for urban local body elections have been withdrawn in Odisha, State Election Commission (SEC) announced on Monday. The decision was taken as the COVID situation improved in the state, SEC AP Padhi said. The elections are slated to be held on 24 March.

Padhi, however, pointed out that restrictions might be re-imposed if cases soar again.

The state on Monday reported 120 new COVID-19 cases, which took the tally to 12,86,009, while the toll remained unchanged at 9,101 as no new fatality was recorded, the health department said.

Elections to 106 ULBs -- 47 municipalities and 59 notified area council -- and three municipal corporations will be held on March 24. Votes will be counted two days later.

In a first, provisions have been made for directly electing the mayor of municipal corporations and chairpersons of municipalities and notified area council.

Two EVMs will be placed in the polling booths – one for electing the mayor or chairperson of civic bodies and the other for local councillor. Over 41 lakh voters will be exercising their franchise in 4,475 booths.