

Covid-19: No more Rs.500 fine on Delhiites for not wearing masks in public places

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- **Earlier in April, DDMA had passed an order stating that masks would be mandatory with a violation penalty of ₹500 after the it saw rise in Covid cases.**

As Covid cases fall in the national capital, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) has decided to stop levying the ₹500 fine for not wearing masks in public places.

Services of health care workers hired on contract in Covid hospitals extended till the end of the year, the order stated.

Earlier in April, DDMA had passed an order stating that masks would be mandatory with a violation penalty of ₹500 after the it saw rise in Covid cases.

However, in a meeting held last month, DDMA had emphasised not lowering guard against COVID due to upcoming festivals even as it decided to do away with wearing face masks after September 30.

The decision to revoke the mask mandate was anything but unanimous and differences abound, as per the minutes of the meeting issued by Sushil Singh, special CEO, disaster management.

Chief Secretary of Delhi Naresh Kumar had in the meeting said that the current situation was comfortable but the guard against Coronavirus could not be lowered as the variants keep coming up.

The health ministry has advised caution in view of multiple festivals – from September 26 to December 31 – and likely mass gatherings across the country.

Niti Aayog member Dr V K Paul had in the meeting emphasised that surveillance was still needed as the virus is still present and its mutations and variants have emerged from time to time.

Dr Rajendra Singh, member NDMA, came up with a suggestion that wearing of masks be continued up to November 15 in view of coming festivals.

Delhi Police Commissioner sought clarity and complete set of instructions on the enforcement of mask mandate.

The Chief Secretary suggested that a “self discipline mode” may be tried now as the public is well aware of its responsibilities and what constitutes a COVID-appropriate behaviour.

The meeting chaired by LG V K Saxena and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in attendance, summarily agreed that though wearing of masks was useful in maintaining a COVID-appropriate behaviour, the order of compulsory wearing of masks under the Epidemic Act may not be extended beyond September 30.

The DDMA also gave its nod to dismantle the Covid care centres erected on the properties of Radha Soami Satsang, Chhattarpur, Swan Kirpal, Burari, and Sant Nirankari, Burari and vacate their land. It

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was also decided that the medical equipment would be transferred to the hospitals where it was needed. There were 11 Covid care centres established in the national capital due to a spike in cases.

Meanwhile, Delhi on Tuesday reported 74 fresh Covid cases with a positivity rate of 1.07 per cent. No Covid-related fatality was reported, the department had said in its latest bulletin. The number of active COVID-19 cases in Delhi stands at 359. A total of 262 patients are under home isolation, the bulletin said.

There are 45 containment zones in Delhi, it added. The number of daily COVID-19 cases in Delhi touched a record high of 28,867 on January 13 during the third wave of the pandemic. The city recorded a positivity rate of 30.6 per cent on January 14, the highest during the third wave.

(With inputs from agencies)