

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. ECI/PN/17/2022

06.02.2022

PRESS NOTE

Ban on road shows, Pad-Yatras, cycle/bike/vehicle rallies and processions to continue

ECI grants further relaxation for Physical public meetings in indoor Halls and Outdoor meetings

Covid appropriate behaviour and Precautions to be observed strictly

Limit of 20 Persons for Door to Door Campaign to Continue

Election Commission vide Press Note No. ECI/PN/3/2022 dated 8th January, 2022 had announced General Election to Legislative Assemblies of Goa, Punjab, Manipur, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, 2022. On the same day, Commission had also issued “Revised Broad Guidelines, 2022” to conduct General Elections/Bye-Elections during COVID after wide consultations and after assessing the prevailing situation of COVID. In the revised guidelines, Commission had prescribed restrictions and precautions to be taken during the conduct of elections. Commission had also stated that it will review the pandemic situation periodically and take a further view on tightening or relaxing the guidelines based on ground level situation.

Considering the improving situation of pandemic, Commission has periodically reviewed the situation and had relaxed some restrictions on physical meetings and door-to-door campaigning on 15th January, 22nd January and 31st January, 2022.

In the last review done on 31st January, Commission issued more relaxation and allowed Political parties or contesting candidates to hold outdoor meetings in designated open spaces with a maximum of 1000 persons (instead of existing 500 persons) or 50% of the capacity of the ground and for **indoor meetings**, a maximum of 500 persons (instead of existing 300 persons) or 50% of the capacity of the hall or the

prescribed limit set by SDMA, whichever number is lesser, from 1st February, 2022, for all phases. The Commission has also enhanced the limit for door to door campaigns from 10 persons to 20 persons, excluding security personnel.

Chief Secretaries of poll going States have written to the Commission and have apprised that there has been significant improvement in the prevailing Covid situation, a considerable decrease in the number of positive cases of COVID and also decrease in cases of hospitalization. Most of them have recommended to the Commission to consider for relaxation and allow increased number of persons in the indoor/outdoor campaign meetings.

Commission has appointed Special Observers for poll going States to oversee free and fair conduct of poll. After receiving references from Chief Secretaries, Commission took inputs and views from the Special Observers also. Many Special Observers have sent their reports and have stated that the Covid situation has improved substantially and positivity rate has come down significantly. They have also stated that coverage of vaccination in the state is very satisfactory for the 1st Dose, 2nd Dose and Precaution Dose to frontline workers and Poll duty officials. In this light, they have recommended that the Commission may consider revisiting the existing campaign guidelines and permit further relaxation in the Campaign norm to ensure greater participation in the ongoing election process. Most of them recommended to increase limit the number of people attending the rallies in open/indoor space to about 50% and not limiting it to a number.

Taking into account these recommendations/inputs, the Commission held a meeting with the Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India on 5th February, 2022 to assess the prevailing ground situation and to take inputs and suggestions in this regard.

Union Health Secretary briefed Commission about the ground situation of COVID. He brought to the notice of the Commission that Covid cases are fast receding in the country and even in the reported cases maximum cases are reported from non-poll going States. The poll going states are contributing a very small proportion of the total reported cases in the country. Union Health Secretary briefed the Commission that

the peak of Covid had been reached on 21st/ 22nd January after that All India figures of the Covid cases are fast receding from around 2.93 Lakh to 1.72 Lakh. Specially in the Poll going states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa total number of cases which were more than 32 thousand at peak on 22nd January, 2022 have reduced to around 7 thousand on 5th February, 2022.

He appreciated the coverage of Vaccination of 1st, 2nd doses for eligible persons, Preventive doses for frontline workers and poll personnel in the poll going States. He said that coverage of even vaccination of 17 to 18 years old in the poll going states is very satisfactory.

Commission noticed that relaxation decisions are being taken various states like opening of schools/colleges and other institutions in the light of decreasing trends of Covid.

After taking into consideration all the inputs, facts and circumstances and ground reports from Special Observers, State Chief Secretaries and Union Health Secretary and in the wake of considerable decrease in the number of positive cases, progressive improvement in the prevailing COVID situation and considering the short period remaining for campaigning for elections and need for greater participation of Political parties and Candidates, the Commission has henceforth decided to revise guidelines as below:

1. Ban on **road shows, Pad-Yatras, cycle/bike/vehicle rallies and processions** will remain as it before.
2. Maximum number of persons permissible for door to door campaigning fixed at 20 will also remain as before.
3. Ban on campaign between 8 PM and 8 AM will also continue as before.
4. Restrictions regarding outdoor meeting/indoor meetings/rallies will be further relaxed subject to condition that the number of persons attending the indoor/outdoor meetings/rallies will be limited to maximum of 50 percent of the capacity of Indoor halls and 30 percent of the open ground capacity or as fixed by DEO as per requirement of the social distancing norms and whichever is less.

5. If the SDMA has set the ceiling limits or percentage of the capacity for number of persons attending indoor hall or open ground and they are stricter, SDMA guidelines will prevail.
6. Open ground rallies can be held only in the grounds specifically designated by the district authorities and subject to compliance of all the conditions of SDMA. Allocation of these grounds will be given equitably by District Administration through e-Suvidha portal on first come first serve basis. Capacities of these grounds will be fixed by the District Administration well in advance and notify to all the parties.
7. There should be multiple entry and exit points so that there is no crowding as people are coming and leaving the venue. All entrances must have adequate hand hygiene and thermal screening provisions. Adequate number of hand sanitizers should be kept at entrance as well as within the rally area. Seating arrangement must ensure adequate physical distancing and use of masks at all times is mandatory.
8. Adequate manpower should be deployed/ arranged by the organizers to ensure observance to physical distancing norms, mask wearing and other preventive measures at all times.
9. In designated open ground meetings, people should be accommodated in adequate clusters and such clusters should be separated by separation arrangements. The organisers will ensure this arrangement and nodal officers will ensure compliance.
10. The organisers and concerned political parties shall abide by all the above instructions and SDMA related guidelines and ensure covid appropriate behaviour by persons participating in meetings/rallies. Organisers will be responsible for any breach of the Covid related protocols and guidelines.
11. District Magistrates will nominate nodal officers to oversee the arrangements done by organisers and ensure compliance of the guidelines. DMs and SPs of the districts will ensure compliance of the instructions and Covid appropriate behaviour and guidelines.
12. It shall be overall responsibility of the DEO concerned to identify, notify and allot the designated spaces in advance for the aforesaid purposes.

13. All remaining restrictions as contained in the Revised Broad Guidelines for Conduct of Elections, 2022 issued on 8 January 2022 shall continue to operate.
14. Commission will review the situation periodically and take necessary decision for amendment in its guidelines, if any based on. ground level situation.



Anuj Chandak
Joint Director (Media)