

# Osaka Prefecture to lift all business restrictions due to virus on June 1

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OSAKA--The Osaka prefectural government decided on May 28 to end all business closure requests on May 31 by lifting those remaining for live music venues and other attractions with high risk of novel coronavirus infections.

Neighboring Hyogo and Kyoto prefectures, which along with Osaka had been covered by the state of emergency over the COVID-19 pandemic until May 21, had already made similar decisions.

That means all business closure requests in the Kinki region will end at midnight on May 31.

Osaka lifted most of its restrictions on businesses, except for live music venues, karaoke parlors, sports clubs, and host and hostess clubs due to outbreaks of cluster infections there, but they will also be lifted.

If the number of new infections in the prefecture starts rising again, Osaka will ask businesses to temporarily close based on its own numerical targets, referred to as the "Osaka model."

But Osaka Governor Hirofumi Yoshimura expressed caution on May 28 about repeatedly making such closure requests to businesses.

"I'm worried that residents cannot maintain their livelihoods if we take the same measures every time a wave of infections hits the prefecture," he said.

The prefectural government initially planned to allow the businesses, where cluster infections have occurred, to reopen from May 30. But it decided at a May 28 meeting of its task force handling the coronavirus outbreak to push back the date to June 1 to keep in step with Hyogo and Kyoto.

To prevent infections, the Osaka prefectural government will ask operators of the businesses to follow guidelines for each sector created by industry organizations as a precondition for lifting its closure requests.

The prefectural government had to create new guidelines for live music venues and host and hostess clubs as no guidelines existed.