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ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE



August 11, 2020

Press release

Government announces nationwide lockdown

The government announces nationwide lockdown starting today, following report of a COVID-19 positive case in Gelephu, who came in close contact with people in Thimphu, Gelephu, Paro and those along the way.

The government enforces restrictions on movement of people and vehicles within the Dzongkhags and beyond. Everyone is asked to stay home to protect themselves and their families from the disease, should there be undetected, rampant transmissions.

All schools, institutions, offices and commercial establishments will remain closed. Ongoing exams will be postponed, while the students and trainees in boarding facilities should continue to remain on campus and follow COVID-19 protocols.

The unprecedented lockdown is enforced to identify and isolate all positive cases, immediately breaking the chain of transmission.

The drastic yet extensive measures of lockdown now, complemented by strict public compliance, will help us achieve our target of combating the spread of the disease with efficiency, in a shorter period of time. This will enable the government to make arrangements to ease out the restrictions as soon as possible.

For proper coordination and implementation of the lockdown, the government held National COVID-19 Taskforce meeting at the Ministry of Health last night.

The taskforce, led by the prime minister, received guidance from His Majesty The King, who stayed with the team all through the night at the ministry.

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The case

The 27-year-old woman, who had returned from Kuwait on June 26 was placed in a mandatory quarantine facility in Paro. Following tests were carried out starting the third day of quarantine, as per the National COVID-19 testing protocol:

June 29: A PCR test revealed that she was COVID-19 negative.

July 10: On her 14th day in quarantine, she tested negative on PCR but positive on rapid test (IgG).

July 13: Another PCR test showed negative result.

July 17: A PCR test was repeated, which reconfirmed that she was negative.

July 18: A rapid test was conducted where she tested positive (IgG).

July 25: PCR test showed she was negative, while she tested positive on rapid test (IgG).

Since the rapid tests revealed that she was IgG positive on three occasions, her quarantine stay was extended by another week. All through, she was asymptomatic.

On July 26, the 30th day of her quarantine, she was allowed to leave after testing negative on PCR. She was recommended home quarantine. Subsequent follow up by the health officials on August 3 and 5 confirmed that she was still asymptomatic.

In keeping with the health protocol, she was advised to report to a flu clinic on August 10. She reported to a flu clinic in Gelephu yesterday, where she tested positive on PCR.

She was immediately isolated at the COVID centre, while contact tracings were initiated right away. A total of 97 contacts were traced as of 5.20 am today.



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Tracing contacts

The health ministry traced 97 contacts at the time of the press release. Twenty one are in Thimphu, 72 in Gelephu, three in Paro and one in Zhemgang.

The suspects are being tested on both rapid and PCR, alongside more contact tracings.

Meanwhile, upon release from the quarantine facility in Paro on July 26, she travelled to Thimphu in a taxi. There was one more passenger with her. Before that, she had taken ride with a woman, who came to pick up two De-suups upon completion of their quarantine duty.

In Thimphu, she stayed with a friend, who lived with a brother-in-law and a cousin. On July 30, she took a taxi to Sershong gewog in Gelephu, where her parents lived. She met her grandparents and relatives, who have all been identified as primary contacts.

On August 9, she met her friends and their families. Accompanied by her step father and a friend, she visited the Gelephu flu clinic on August 10. In between, they had stopped for lunch and also visited a few shops.

Meanwhile, the woman had used Druk Trace app at only one place. Had she used more often, contract tracing would have been easier and faster.

Her friend, who had shared room with her in Paro quarantine facility from June 26 to July 10 had travelled to Zhemgang. She has tested negative.

Lockdown guideline

The government requests everyone to strictly follow essential information on lockdown shared in a **separate brochure**.

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On the part of the government, during the lockdown, we will ensure testing of all suspects, quarantine of close contacts and isolation and treatment of confirmed cases.

We will ensure coordination and facilitate distribution of essential food supplies in all the districts. Essential as well as emergency medical services will be facilitated.

This is an unprecedented time, and we solicit support and cooperation of every Bhutanese in ensuring the success of the lockdown. The government will share information with the public as and when available. Please follow the updates and adhere to the instructions closely.

Essential numbers

Health Help Centre (Medical Emergency)	112
COVID-19 hotline	2121
Elderly care/Medication refill	6060
Disaster communication helpline	999
Fire	110
Electricity	1250
Police	113
National Commission for Women and Children	1098
Financial Services	1255
C19 Task Force (Phuentsholing)	5555



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