

Press release: Venturing into the new normal: Unlocking period ends.



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normal: Unlocking
period ends**

PMO, Bhutan

Drawing curtain on the third and final phase, we are happy to have touched yet another significant milestone of seamless unlocking. We now embark on a new journey that encompasses new responsibilities.

As reiterated, the 21-day lock down was the safest shield for our people, as they stayed indoor and protected themselves from the COVID-19 disease. Ten days on, and we have reached a very critical stage.

We are enhancing access and mobility, and that also heightens exposure to infection. Therefore, it is important for every individual to understand that the relaxations are primarily to improve convenience and engage in economic activities and livelihood.

We urge everyone to avoid rushing and travel during the initial weeks. The rush could also lead to traffic accidents. Except for the essential ones, please avoid leisure trips. Moreover, should there be undetected cases of coronavirus, allowing movement beyond the district starting tomorrow also means that disease could spread to other parts of the country.

Which is why we categorised the areas and districts into low and high risks. It is implied that we do not have “risk free” areas.

For now, all areas (not districts) adjacent to international boundaries are considered as high risk. With advice from Ministry of Health, government will inform public on the risk levels of the areas and districts, as and when required.

Movement of individuals between low risk areas

1. Starting 5am, September 11, inter-district movement of vehicles are allowed.
2. For record and management of information that will assist government in effective response to combat the spread of the disease, all travellers will have to register with the Royal Bhutan Police.
3. Registrations can be done online. Please visit the link <http://cpms.rbp.gov.bt/> Those who are unable to register online can call help desk at 1010.

Travellers can also register at bus stations, Road Safety and Transport Authority counters and the RBP check-posts at various points. However, to avoid long queues at the check-posts, we encourage everyone to opt for online registration or call the help desk.

4. Buses are allowed to ferry passengers up to 50 percent of the capacity.
5. Starting tomorrow, taxis are allowed to carry maximum of three passengers

at a time. Two at the back, one in front.

6. Private cars must carry only 50 percent of the capacity, unless they are all family members.

Movement of individuals from high risk to low risk areas

In keeping with the epidemiological status of an area or a district, government introduces following measures to complement surveillance efforts to prevent spread of COVID-19 from high to low risk areas.

1. Those travelling from high risk to low risk areas will have to undergo a seven-day mandatory facility quarantine at the place of origin.
2. A COVID-19 test will be carried out at the end of the quarantine period.
3. For emergencies (medical and death related), travellers from high risk to low risk areas will be tested and released on the same day, but in a contained manner and under strict supervision.

Movement of individuals from low risk to high risk areas

1. Those wishing to travel from low to high risk areas will have to wait until all unlocking formalities are complete in those areas.
2. Regional taskforce members will update the public on the stages of unlocking and subsequent relaxations.
3. Elderlies and individuals with co-morbid conditions are discouraged from travelling to high risk areas.

Movement of individuals from high risk to high risk areas

1. Individuals travelling from one high risk to another high risk area need not go through the quarantine protocol, unless specified by health ministry.

Business entities

1. All shops can open but must ensure proper spacing and other COVID-19 netiquettes.
2. Eateries and restaurants can allow sit-in customers but must not exceed 50 percent of the capacity at a given time. However, everyone is encouraged to opt for delivery and take-away services.
3. Barber shops and salons can operate but must ensure 50 percent of the capacity and enforce strict COVID-19 practices considering the heightened risk. Video game parlors and snookers can also operate at 50 percent capacity.
4. Informal businesses and street vendors can operate. They must wear facemasks and follow food safety procedures.

Sports

1. Sports facilities like gym, yoga, dance studios and rubber tracks can operate at 50 percent capacity.
2. Non-contact sports of athletics and golf, and partial contact sports of badminton, tennis and table tennis are allowed.
3. Given the engagement for fitness among people, all futsal, football turfs and basketball courts, including private, can operate. However, there should not be any spectators at any time.
4. Archery may be played, subject to not more than 15 participants. No spectators are allowed.
5. The business closure time of 9pm will not apply to sports.
6. Parks and public places can open with strict monitoring of crowd.

Schools, colleges and institutes

1. Classes X and XII will resume from September 14, and Classes IX and XI

will also start on-campus school from September 21. Those classes in high risk areas will have to wait until the unlocking procedures are complete in those places.

2. Technical and vocational training institutes, including private driving and tailoring courses, can resume.

3. While colleges can reopen, the Royal University of Bhutan will announce the details.

Public gathering

1. All social events are discouraged. Unavoidable ones should be limited to family members.

2. Cremation and funeral rites, and other rituals at home are permitted but without gathering.

3. Official meetings, seminars, workshops and travels are not allowed.

Note• Facemasks are mandatory.• Activities that don't feature in this press release are being reviewed and announcements will be made accordingly.