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Extension of nationwide lockdown

Press Release December 29, 2020

As we complete the seven-day nationwide lockdown tonight, we would like to inform all that National COVID-19 Taskforce has decided to extend it until the festivities of New Year and Nyilo are over.

This is to discourage gathering of people, which could otherwise heighten risk of the disease spread. As was evident this time, one of the main transmissions of the disease was linked to an organised archery tournaments in Paro and Thimphu.

As you are aware, an effective lockdown is imperative in breaking the chain of transmission. The extension will also enable our health workers to continue efforts in containment and prevention of the disease. While mass screening of representative samples are complete, the tests results are being processed. Further analysis will be made to determine way forward.

Therefore, the smart unlocking process will be initiated only after the holidays. It will be carried out through region, dzongkhag, zone and also activity wise, based on epidemiological indicators we have gathered.

We would like to inform once again that unlike the first lockdown in August, this time we have clear evidence of local transmission, and magnitude of managing the disease is more difficult and complicated. However, it was an early outbreak and our interventions are on track.

We are also aware of the inconvenience it has caused our people, particularly those who are stranded away from home. But if we ease the movement of people, it would counter our efforts of containing the spread of the disease. Which is why we are considering only death and illness related emergencies for now.

Do you know that this lockdown, which led to 174 positive cases so far was triggered by that one person somewhere who, knowingly or otherwise, contracted the disease? His Majesty, in both the nation addresses related to COVID-19 highlighted that the recklessness of a single person would completely undermine all our national efforts.

Therefore, for the long term sustenance and livelihood, we plead our people to bear with these short term sacrifices today. This is also one opportunity to live up to His Majesty's expectations and be in service of the nation by participating in prevention of disease spread.

We remain guided and inspired by His Majesty The King, who is graciously adhering to all health protocols, while ensuring the people are safe and our nation protected from the disease.

At this stage, His Majesty has commanded all taskforces and experts to look into measures to strengthen and secure all inconsistencies to prevent another lockdown. Upon the Royal command, we are also working closely with donor partners and production units to secure the vaccine as soon as possible.