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Easing nationwide lockdown

Press release

January 4, 2021

With blessings of His Majesty The King, and the show of support and solidarity by the people, we witnessed an effective lockdown of 13 days, and an additional three days for Thimphu as of today.

After studying the epidemiological evidences and determining all probabilities of further disease spread, the National COVID-19 Taskforce has decided to roll out the measures to ease nationwide lockdown starting **January 6, 2021**.

The announcement comes after the national taskforce members carried out exhaustive consultations and coordination meetings with all relevant agencies and districts to ensure smooth implementation of the unlocking measures.

The “smart” unlocking strategy encompasses phase-wise relaxations, customised for areas based on randomised nationwide sweeping of the disease. The districts have been classified into three colours of red, yellow and green.

However, the colour coding is also observed within the districts to indicate presence of disease and enforce measures accordingly.

Phase 1

Red zones

1. For Thimphu and Paro, the existing restrictions will prevail. This is due to sporadic cases being detected from the communities. Continuing with the restrictions will also help avoid the anticipated spike other countries have experienced after about second week of lockdown lift.
2. Additional relaxations will be announced as situations improve, and intervals between the detection of positive cases widen.
3. However, travel of stranded people in Thimphu and Paro will be allowed beyond the emergency cases, and facilitated accordingly.

For Thimphu, the stranded people have to register with 1010. Upon issuance of e-pass, the travellers have to visit the specified flu-clinic for testing. During the test, a member of the host family must accompany the traveller to rule out presence of disease in both the stranded person and the resident.

The information will then be shared to the local leaders of the destination dzongkhags. Upon reaching the destination, local authorities have to ensure the person undergoes mandatory 7-day home quarantine. After the completion of home quarantine, an antigen test will be carried out.

Green zones

1. For dzongkhags other than Thimphu and Paro, movement beyond the zones, but within the same dzongkhag is allowed. As for the transportation, only utility vehicles are allowed. Use of public and private vehicles may be considered by the local taskforces if urgent.
2. Unavoidable inter-dzongkhag movements will be allowed only upon approval of dzongkhag taskforces.
3. The dzongkhag taskforces will review and decide on introducing additional relaxations.

Yellow zone

1. For the yellow zones of Lhamoidzingkha throm in Dagana, Domkhar and Chamkhar in Bumthang, Phenteykha village in Punakha, Pelela in Wangduephodrang, Kela village in Trongsa and, Katso and Uesu gewogs in Haa, the movement is limited to card holders only.
2. Emergency cases to travel out of the yellow zone will need clearance from the respective taskforce and undergo a RT-PCR test. Those wishing to travel into yellow zone will be allowed.
3. Non-essential shops must remain closed and no construction works are allowed.

Additional relaxations within the yellow zones will be decided by respective taskforces.

Phase 2

After seven days, a randomised sample testing will be carried out to assess the situation in all districts. Additional relaxations under Phase 2 will be announced thereafter.

Our vigilance at the borders remain augmented and additional precaution of 7-day quarantine requirement while travelling from high-risk areas is now reactivated.

Note:

- The use of face mask and Druk Trace app is mandatory.
- The breach of the COVID-19 protocols will be dealt as per the Penal Code of Bhutan.