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སློན་ཆེན་ཡིག་ཚང་།  
ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN  
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

January 30, 2022

**Press release**

This is to inform all that while the assessment of COVID-19 spread in the country is still on, the nationwide restrictions have assisted us in holding out against the otherwise dreadful outbreak of the disease so far. We thank you all for the support and cooperation.

For Thimphu, except for some unexpected pockets, most of the areas have withstood the outbreak. As we wait for results from the South Megazone, the preliminary outcome until now is reassuring. In this backdrop, the National COVID-19 Taskforce announces the unlocking of Thimphu in a cautious mode.

- Starting tomorrow, we will revert the movement to mega-zones from respective zones until February 3. However, people will need to follow the timing on the movement cards.
- Areas with positive cases have been indicated as red buildings and clusters, and cordoned off for professional management. While tracing of the primary contacts has been carried out, further surveillance is underway to ensure the communities are safe.
- Experiences world over reveal a spike in the number of positive cases with every reopening. Therefore, we urge our people to remain indoors despite the relaxations.
- Should there be no surprises over the days, free movement within the mega-zones without having to adhere to the card timing will be observed until February 6. However, a separate announcement will be made after risk assessment, as our decisions are subjected to rapid evolving conditions on the ground.

Page 1 of 3



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Meanwhile, the NC19TF issues following updates as a way forward, based on the risk assessment and disease profiling so far.

1. All the regional and local taskforces are instructed to institute relaxations or reinforce further measures based on the ground situation, indicated with the colour coding of the dzongkhags and local areas.

For public information, as of today:

- Gasa, Haa, Trongsa, Bumthang, Trashigang, Mongar, Trashiyangtse, Lhuntse and Zhemgang are “green dzongkhags”.
  - Paro throm and adjacent gewogs are “yellow areas”.
  - Thimphu throm and adjacent Chang and Kawang gewogs, parts of Sarpang, Samtse, Pemagatshel (Nganglam) and Punakha, most of Wangduephodrang, Chukha (Phuentsholing), Samdrupjongkhar, Tsirang and Dagana are “red areas and dzongkhags”. The classification of areas within the dzongkhags are determined by the local taskforces based on disease presence and associated threats.
2. The inter-dzongkhag movement from the “green” dzongkhags and areas is allowed. However, given the sporadic cases detected in the communities and with possibilities of sudden restrictions, we remind everyone to strictly avoid unnecessary travels.
  3. The inter-dzongkhag travels from yellow and red dzongkhags and areas will require testing or quarantine as per the decision of local taskforces. For Thimphu, mandatory RT-PCR testing is required for travels.
  4. With more number of cases being detected, a mandatory RT-PCR testing with a seven-day validity is being instituted for all drivers ferrying goods. The testing will be made available at all the flu clinics and centres.



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5. In view of the upcoming Traditional Day of Offering on February 2, all the local taskforces are urged to ensure strict monitoring of gatherings, and other restrictions, as spelt out in the notification issued on January 20.

Since the declaration of “blackout” on January 16 and further extension of lockdown, a total of 116,387 COVID-19 tests were carried out across the country until today. A total of 1,781 cases, of which 403 were in the community, were detected since then.

Irrespective of the relaxation, we urge the people of Bhutan to take utmost caution as the present outbreak is yet to be contained. We are hopeful that the situation across the country improves in the coming days, and for Thimphu particularly, we anticipate a complete unlocking by the end of the seventh day of the movement restrictions.