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ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

March 26, 2022

Press release
Phase-wise relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions

As we continue to cautiously transition into the second phase of our national response to the pandemic, we remain mindful of the evolving trends and evidence of the COVID-19 both nationally and internationally.

Since the last relaxation on March 19, although the number of positive cases increased, the rates of severity and hospitalisation have been negligible. Therefore, it gives us the confidence for further relaxation on COVID-19 preventive measures in Thimphu and in other Dzongkhags.

The relaxations will come into effect from **March 28, 2022 (Monday)**.

1. Movement across mega-zones in Thimphu is allowed.
2. Use of private cars and taxis, and operation of city busses are allowed.
3. All indoor and outdoor sporting activities will be permitted but without spectators. Tournaments are not allowed for now. Individuals showing symptoms of COVID-19 are discouraged from taking part in any sporting activity.
4. Archery and *kburn* are allowed but must be kept at a maximum of 10 players per match, until the final relaxation.
5. All offices must open with the option of work-from-home for individuals with:
 - a) Health conditions and co-morbidities (validated by medical professionals)
 - b) Nursing mothers
 - c) Mothers or single fathers with unvaccinated children of 4 years or below.
6. All workshops, seminars and conferences to be held virtually.
7. All public transport services must resume its routine schedule.



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8. The following driver switching stations in the country are finally being lifted.
- Sorchen, Chukha
 - Darachu, Tsirang/Gelephu
 - Tshobalay, Nganglam
 - Tshelingkhor, Samdrupjongkhar
 - Tamala, Zhemgang

All the goods carriers can commute without having to switch or quarantine but they must have an antigen negative result of two weeks validity.

9. Individuals travelling from high to low-risk areas will continue to undergo seven-day home quarantine, as per the existing protocol. This will be reviewed soon in keeping with the disease pattern resulting from the relaxations.
10. Inter-dzongkhag transfer of dead bodies will be allowed. A maximum of 40 family members per body will be allowed to attend the cremation.
11. Requirement of working in containment mode in factories and industries can be withdrawn, unless the particular organisation desires otherwise.

Relaxations starting April 4, 2022

12. Starting April 4, schools of Classes VII, VIII, IX, X and XII must open in the first phase. The staggered approach is being adopted to avoid spike in cases. While the school authorities need not maintain containment protocols, all COVID norms must be ensured.
13. Primary schools (Classes PP to VI) will start from April 18. However, children who are unvaccinated, and the day care and ECCD centres, must wait for another 10 days to resume.
14. All colleges and institutions must open from April 4 or soon after, based on the preparation time required.



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15. The quarantine period for incoming (international) travellers will be reduced to five days starting April 4. The testing protocol will be revised accordingly.
16. Any vulnerable person who needs extra care can seek the services of the Reverse Isolation Facilities, a timely initiative that emanated from His Majesty's compassionate heart.

For Thimphu, please contact 02343655, 02343659, 02343656, 02343640 or 02343630. For other dzongkhags, please contact the respective dzongkhag kidu officers (dzongrabs) or local government channels.

Meanwhile, we would like to remind once again that Omicron is a milder variant in comparison but not necessarily "mild". It still causes severe COVID-19 and the unvaccinated ones are at a greater risk. People above the age of five, who are still unvaccinated, are urged to come forward.

We request everyone to take utmost care, avoid unnecessary mass gathering, continue to use face masks and frequently wash hands or use hand sanitizer. In case of any flu-like symptoms, please get tested at the nearest health facility.