

(Unofficial Translation)

Official Statement of the Office of the Prime Minister

RE: Regulation Issued under Section 9 of the Emergency Decree on Public Administration
in Emergency Situations B.E. 2548 (2005) (No. 2)

As Prime Minister and Director of the Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), I wish to report to you the following developments:

Public Health and Medical Issues: Social distancing is most important now and we all should stay home to prevent the further spread of the virus. Please listen to advice/instructions from doctors. Medical personnel throughout the country urgently need support in the form of medical equipment, supplies, and masks. Of paramount importance is to have an efficient and effective system where such items are readily available to them in every hospital across all areas. I will oversee this issue directly so that all our heroic medical staff, who are in the frontlines of this battle and have given their all, will be ensured of such equipment and support. This includes our unwavering encouragement and confidence for their outstanding efforts.

I ensure you that we have enough medicines for the treatment of the virus, and we have a plan ready to acquire more from overseas should the situation escalate. Please rest assured that all patients will have medication and hospital beds for their care according to international standards. Additional rooms, should they be needed, are available from several hostels and hotels, who have kindly pledged assistance. In addition, as all patients with this virus are considered as emergency cases, there are three government funds that will be used to pay for their medical expenses, namely the National Health Security Fund, the Social Security for Medical Treatment Fund, and the Civil Servant Benefits for Medical Treatment Fund.

Protecting the public and security issues: We need to understand that limiting traveling, movement of peoples, meetings, and large gatherings are essential to prevent the further increase of infected persons, especially in risk-prone areas. Several areas have already implemented tighter controls according to situation developments and recommendations by medical personnel. Some provinces have already imposed curfews and restrictions on opening times for shops, including time allowed outside homes to curb the spread of virus, such as in Phuket and other southern border provinces. We have to take these controls seriously, even though they will inconvenience us, but we all have to adapt to survive and get through this crisis. We all need to take responsibility for each other.

Therefore, to prevent the further spread of this virus and to limit the movement of people, a curfew will be imposed from 22.00hrs. to 04.00hrs. throughout the Kingdom of Thailand. There will be exceptions for necessary cases, medical personnel, bank staff, and the transport of necessary consumer items including medical equipment, supplies, and petrol. Exceptions will also be for workers who need to work particular time shifts and travelers to and from all airports, with permission required from local authorities. This will be effective from 3 April 2020 at 22.00hrs. Please do not panic and hoard consumer items. People will still be able to buy items normally during the daytime, but please strictly observe social distancing.

Controlling consumer prices: I have given orders for the establishment of a centre to distribute masks and medical supplies to the people, as well as a centre to ensure the control of consumer item prices. I wish to reiterate that I will not allow for anyone to hoard essential supplies or take advantage of the situation and further distress the people. So far, since the Government has been strictly enforcing the pertaining laws (through investigations by officials into the production and selling of essential items), we have arrested many culprits. They will receive their due penalties. The penalty for hoarding such items is harsh and could involve imprisonment of up to 7 years and/or a fine of up to

140,000 baht. If any citizen is aware or has information on such activity, you can inform the Government by telephone number 1135.

Assistance for those economically affected: The Government has already introduced several measures for employees and business owners to mitigate the economic impacts from the Covid19 situation, such as: the five-thousand-baht per month scheme for three months for free-lance workers totaling about 9 million people now, deposit returns for electricity bills and public water works, and the reduction of electricity and public water fees for three months. These measures are just the beginning and more will come. We will introduce an ease on interest payments for mortgages, automobile installments, an extension of payment on pawned items, and the reduction of minimum payment on credit card bills. Workers in the social security scheme will only pay 1% for three months. For business owners and SMEs, the Government will provide assistance and reduce your expenses, including assistance to manage your existing debts to avoid NPL status through taxation and monetary adjustments. We will leave no one behind.

On foreign affairs: The CCSA has set up a centre to handle entry and exit of persons to the country and the care for Thai citizens abroad, which has enhanced strict screening mechanisms for travelers to and from Thailand. This is to prevent newly infected persons from entering the country. Since the declaration of the State of Emergency, no foreigners have been able to enter Thailand, except for diplomatic officials, those with work permits, and air crew. As for our citizens who are still abroad, we will take care of you and will amend the previous anomalies in the process for those who wish to return to Thailand. If you wish to travel back, you will need to undergo a screening process and a strict quarantine and observation period upon your return.

Nevertheless, at this time, I ask for your cooperation to consider delaying your return from today until 15 April 2020, to protect the health of the Thai people and other travelers who wish to return, so that our officials can set up a system to prepare for your arrival.

If returning is absolutely necessary, please contact the Royal Thai Embassy or the Royal Thai Consulate-General immediately.

Another important issue is communications in a crisis situation to maintain public confidence and for people to be able to work with clarity and in unison. The Centre has established a communications network that works independently and with a single voice. We have a daily press briefing following the Centre's meeting, which has been broadcasting live through all outlets, with the Centre's Spokesman or a delegated person solely responsible. Please avoid interviews with those who have not been authorised by the Centre to dispense information. I ask for the media and social media outlets to be cautious in their communications and use only information provided by the Centre. Please refrain from communications or distorted information that may cause unrest or mislead people. This includes fake news and the dispensing of false information (whether intentionally or not) that will affect our national security, which involves severe penalties during this time of Emergency. Therefore, we all need to do our part and not share information that is not verified or confirmed. Useful information should be communicated, such as government recommendations and guidelines, and volunteer activities.

In this time of crisis, we have brought in many experts, volunteers from the medical, technological, communications and business sectors, to work together to find comprehensive solutions to the problems we are facing. I deeply appreciate all the volunteers who have taken action and have unified to work for our country and the people. This also includes all the charitable donations of money, supplies, and food, and overwhelming moral support. There have been many touching gestures as well, such as slogans, clips, and billboards – all expressing solidarity and encouragement. This 'Thai kindness' will be essential for our overcoming this crisis.

Results so far: The situation now is that we have been able to prevent the spread of the virus to a certain level, in comparison with some other countries. But the ultimate goal is to eliminate this virus from Thailand as soon as we can so that everyone can be safe.

Therefore, we cannot be careless, and we must prevent new infections and reduce the number of all infected persons to “zero”. We have to carefully monitor the situation and continuously enforce strict measures. Some areas may need to apply stronger measures based on their own situations and medical recommendations. I emphasise for all people to maintain social distancing and to stay at home to reduce the burdens on our medical staff who have been working tirelessly to save lives and curb the spread of the virus throughout the past months. If we are resilient and disciplined as a people, we will overcome this.

Lastly, I wish to thank all the officials, especially our medical personnel, who have displayed perseverance, bravery, sacrifice and unwavering commitment to help our people. They have risked their lives and have faced many difficulties. You are deeply appreciated by myself and the Thai people and you are in our hearts. Please rest assured that I will do everything I can to get our country and the Thai people through this most difficult time. Let us fight back together, we must win over this.

Office of the Prime Minister

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