



Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha on 25 March 2020 issued a statement on the state of emergency to combat the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Here is the unofficial translation of the statement by the Prime Minister.

Dear Thai people, in the next months, we will have to deal with a severe situation, which will bring many challenges and difficulties to our nation.

Now we are facing a test that we have never been through before. We also have to accept the reality that we are now at a crossroads and have reached a defining moment in the COVID-19 crisis, which could increase in severity many times over and thus affect our health, incomes, and daily lives.

Therefore, I will have to undertake stronger measures to further prevent the spread of this virus, including its effects on our economy.

From now, I will directly administer all measures in the fight against COVID-19, including disease outbreak prevention, medical care for citizens, compensation and assistance to affected persons, and the revival of our economy. I will head these tasks and therefore, report information directly to the people. Therefore, I will declare a State of Emergency for the Kingdom of Thailand, through the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations B.E. 2548 (2005), from 26 March 2020 onwards.

The Cabinet has approved this and the Centre for the Administration of Spread of the COVID-19 Virus will now function as a Centre for the Resolution of the Emergency Situation, under Section 7 of the Emergency Decree, to integrate the work of all government agencies, and issue comprehensive and clear orders directly to them to ensure swift, coordinated, and firm action. I will head this Centre with the following designations:

- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Health to be in charge of all public health issues for the emergency situation;
- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior to be in charge of all orders to provincial governors and the Governor of Bangkok for the emergency situation;

- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce to be in charge of controls of all consumer products and medical supplies for the emergency situation;
- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be in charge of all foreign affairs issues related to the emergency situation, including assistance provided to Thai citizens overseas;
- Supreme Commander of the Royal Thai Armed Forces to be in charge of all national security issues related to the emergency situation;
- Continued cooperation from advisory teams currently assisting with the Centre.

We will have daily meetings, with direct orders coming from myself to ensure uniformity and coordination throughout all the government agencies. I, or a delegated official, will report on developments directly to the people.

For specific declarations, there will be announcements following the Declaration of the State of Emergency, which will cover such issues as:

- Restrictions for access to risk areas;
- Closure of risk areas;
- Closure of entry/access points to the country;
- Restrictions/conditions on certain vulnerable groups (such as the elderly, the sick, and children) from leaving living premises;
- Restrictions on hoarding of consumer items, and ensuring of price controls on items;
- Restrictions on the deliberate dispensing of distorted information.

I ensure you that there will be no closures of stores that sell necessary or daily needs items. Such measures will result in many inconveniences for the public, but I ask for all of us to make personal sacrifices for the public good. The most important thing to do now is to halt the further spread of this virus (which will involve restrictions into certain areas, with the use of technology to assist in this task, such as an application to monitor locations and quarantines), provide medical care to all affected persons, render assistance to our citizens, and revive our society and economy.

In addition, I will modify our public communications for enhanced clarity and comprehensiveness through only one daily announcement/press briefing that will include a situation report and recommendations for the public to follow. This is to avoid misinterpretations and the dispensing of false information.

I assure you that the people will receive official and verified information that is clear and transparent on a daily basis.

I also ask for cooperation from the media to be responsible in their reporting and use information from our daily announcement/press briefing, especially from our medical experts, rather than interviews from officials or medical personnel who should not be distracted from doing their urgent tasks. In this way, the media will be a great help for the public.

For social media users, we can all help by sharing useful and factual information obtained from our daily announcement/press briefing, while resisting and reporting on the sharing of false information that will harm the public. Instead we can be constructive and creative in sharing valuable information that the public can easily understand.

For those who are thinking of such things at a time when people are suffering, with a life or death situation you will not get away with it. We will use every measure of the law to deal with your actions with firmness and resolve. The enforcement of laws involved with the Communicable Diseases Act will be strictly applied, and this covers the dereliction of duties for government officials.

Furthermore, the Government will need cooperation from all sectors, including the many talented and gifted people in our private sector and civil society, to join hands in this fight. In this week, I will dispatch teams to work with you and all sectors, to create understanding and learn about your needs and capabilities, and ask for your cooperation to come and work together on this urgent matter.

From now on, there will be stronger measures taken by the Government to prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 virus, which will affect the daily lives for all citizens. Please cooperate and be responsible towards society and strictly follow the measures to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. Some people will consider them a restriction on personal liberties, but this will save lives. If we all understand and accept this, remain strong, and take this seriously, I am confident that it will not be long before we will be able to overcome this crisis.

This time will bring pain and hardships for all of us and this crisis will test our unity and resilience. But now is also the time to bring out the best in each other, through our courage, our kindness to one another, and the sacrifices that we have to make to help others. This is very important for us all get through this. The COVID-19 virus has caused much suffering and destruction all over the world, but it cannot destroy the kindness and unity of the Thai people.

As Prime Minister, I pledge to you all that I will do everything I can, so that Thailand can overcome this crisis. The safety and well-being of the Thai people are the most important.

Therefore, I ask all Thai people to have confidence and cooperate, so that we can overcome this crisis together. Our dear country will come out stronger, we will fight together, and we will win.

Thank you.