

Thailand says COVID-19 has peaked, but adds restrictions

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A tuk tuk driver wearing a face mask to help curb the spread of the coronavirus waits for customers in Khao San road, a popular hangout for Thais and tourists in Bangkok, Thailand, Monday, April 26, 2021. Cinemas, parks and gyms were among venues closed in Bangkok as Thailand sees its worst surge of the pandemic. A shortage of hospital beds, along with a failure to secure adequate coronavirus vaccine supplies, have pushed the government into imposing the new restrictions. (AP Photo/Anuthep Cheysakron)

Health authorities said Thailand's recent COVID-19 wave has peaked after setting record daily highs of new cases and deaths, but they are still implementing new restrictions starting Saturday to curb the spread of the virus.

The country on Thursday reported 1,871 new cases for 63,570 total, and 10 virus-related deaths for a total of 188. It was the first time the number of new cases has dropped below 2,000 since April 23.

One major change approved Thursday by the Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration is that people arriving from abroad must spend 14 days in quarantine regardless of where they are coming from or whether they have been vaccinated for COVID-19. Quarantine periods had recently been shortened to 7-10 days from 14 days to help revive the country's massive tourist industry.

Other new restrictions inside Thailand will be applied depending on how provinces rank on a three-tier system of zones according to their number of new COVID-19 cases.

The new rules will be reviewed after two weeks, said Taweasilp Visanuyothin, the center's spokesperson.

In Bangkok, Chiang Mai and four other provinces in the worst tier, restaurants are only allowed to provide takeout service and must close by 9 p.m. All gyms, fitness centers and other indoor sports venues must close. No spectators are allowed at sporting competitions and residents are strongly discouraged, though not banned, from traveling outside the zone.



A shop assistant wearing a face mask to help curb the spread of the coronavirus stands in front of her shop in Khao San road, a popular hangout for Thais and tourists in Bangkok, Thailand, Monday, April 26, 2021. Cinemas, parks and gyms were among venues closed in Bangkok as Thailand sees its worst surge of the pandemic. A shortage of hospital beds, along with a failure to secure adequate coronavirus vaccine supplies, have pushed the government into imposing the new restrictions. (AP Photo/Anuthep Cheysakron)



A worker wearing a face mask to help curb the spread of the coronavirus sweeps with a broom around a restaurant in Khao San road, a popular hangout for Thais and tourists in Bangkok, Thailand, Monday, April 26, 2021. Cinemas, parks and gyms were among venues closed in Bangkok as Thailand sees its worst surge of the pandemic. A shortage of hospital beds, along with a failure to secure adequate coronavirus vaccine supplies, have pushed the government into imposing the new restrictions. (AP Photo/Anuthep Cheysakron)

Earlier this week, Bangkok city authorities already ordered the closing of more than 30 types of businesses and services including cinemas, parks, zoos, bars, pools and massage parlors. Gatherings of more than 20 people were banned. Shopping malls and department stores can open with shorter hours.

In middle-tier provinces, restaurants can stay open until 11 p.m. but dining in is only allowed until 9 p.m. In the small number of provinces qualifying for the best tier, restaurants can serve customers inside until 11 p.m., but in all three zones, serving alcohol is not allowed.

Provinces are allowed to implement further restrictions on their own.

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