

Thailand sets curfew for capital to combat coronavirus surge

July 9 2021



Locals wait in line overnight for free coronavirus testing at the Wat Phra Si Mahathat temple in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, July 9, 2021. After initially being lauded for managing to virtually stop the pandemic in its tracks, several countries in the Asia region have seen numbers spike in recent weeks and are scrambling to speed up sluggish vaccination programs as the coronavirus spreads. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

Officials in Thailand on Friday announced a seven-hour curfew and other restrictions for the capital and nine other provinces to try to slow a growing number of cases and deaths in a coronavirus surge that began in early April.

People living in Bangkok and five surrounding provinces along with four in the country's far south, where the virus is also rampant, are required to remain at home from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m., not hold gatherings of more than five people and avoid unnecessary travel. The restrictions take effect on Monday and will be reviewed after two weeks, Deputy Health Minister Satit Pitutacha said.

In the greater Bangkok area, shopping centers will be closed except for businesses such as supermarkets, banks, pharmacies, takeout food, cellphone sales and repair and vaccination centers, all of which must close by 8 p.m., which is also the closing time for [public parks](#). Restaurants have already been limited to take-out service since June 28.

Convenience stores must close from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m., and beauty salons and massage parlors must shut entirely. Public transport will stop running from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m., and working from home is strongly encouraged. Schools will be closed, with only online learning allowed.

The restrictions were announced as the number of new COVID-19 cases and deaths have soared to record levels, spurred by the spread of the more contagious delta variant and a slow vaccination drive, widely blamed on poor planning by Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's government.



Health workers collect nasal swabs from locals who were waiting through the night for free coronavirus testing at Wat Phra Si Mahathat temple in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, July 9, 2021. Faced with rapidly rising numbers of new coronavirus infections and growing concern over the proliferation of the highly contagious delta variant, major Asia-Pacific cities implemented new restrictions Friday in the hope of reversing the trend before health care systems are overwhelmed. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit



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Health authorities on Friday announced 9,276 new cases, bringing the total to 317,506 since the pandemic began last year. Seventy-two new deaths were confirmed for a total of 2,534. More than 90% of the cases and deaths have occurred since the beginning of April.

Prayuth said Friday he will forgo his official monthly salary of 125,590 baht (\$3,860) for three months as a gesture to help the government

budget, which has been strained by the pandemic.

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Citation: Thailand sets curfew for capital to combat coronavirus surge (2021, July 9) retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-07-thailand-curfew-capital-combat-coronavirus.html>

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