

Thailand tightens measures as daily cases cross 10,000

July 17 2021, by Chalida Ekvittayavechnukul



Residents wait to receive shots of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at the Central Vaccination Center in Bangkok, Thailand, Thursday, July 15, 2021. As many Asian countries battle against a new surge of coronavirus infections, for many their first, the slow-flow of vaccine doses from around the world is finally picking up speed, giving hope that low inoculation rates can increase rapidly and help blunt the effect of the rapidly-spreading delta variant. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

Thailand has tightened coronavirus restrictions and warned of further measures as daily cases surpassed 10,000 and the death toll hit a record 141 on Saturday despite an overnight curfew in Bangkok and several other provinces.

The surge since April has overwhelmed hospitals, strained the economy and thrown tourism recovery plans in doubt. The [vaccine rollout](#), hindered by supply problems, is slugging with some 5% of the population fully vaccinated and 15% only partially.

"I would like everyone to realize our necessity to impose stricter measures soon. We all may get affected and be inconvenienced in many ways," Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha wrote on his Facebook page late on Friday.

Cases have been climbing particularly in Bangkok and surrounding provinces. The [government](#) imposed additional measures overnight including a ban on any gatherings and activities that can spread the virus, including anti-government rallies that have criticized Prayuth's handling of the pandemic.

Violators face up to two years in prison and/or a fine of up to 40,000 baht (\$1,220).

Prayuth said the forthcoming additional measures seek to limit people's mobility as much as possible, close down virtually all non-essential places and implement strict work from home. He said the government's medical committee will discuss and study the lockdown measures in other countries carefully before approving the new ones.



Health workers administer shots of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at the Central Vaccination Center in Bangkok, Thailand, Thursday, July 15, 2021. As many Asian countries battle against a new surge of coronavirus infections, for many their first, the slow-flow of vaccine doses from around the world is finally picking up speed, giving hope that low inoculation rates can increase rapidly and help blunt the effect of the rapidly-spreading delta variant. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

To ease the pressure on hospitals, Prayuth said authorities are considering allowing people to test themselves at home with antigen test kits.

Thai health authorities said Wednesday they will seek to impose limits on exports of the locally produced AstraZeneca vaccine because the

country doesn't have enough for its own needs. Production of the AstraZeneca jabs at a Thai factory has fallen short of its target, likely delaying the government's plan to acquire a total of 61 million doses until next May.

"The government will speed up securing as many vaccines as we can from everywhere and we've never blocked the [private sector](#) from securing alternative vaccines," Prayuth said on Facebook, addressing some of the criticism of his management of the crisis.

He has earlier announced plans to allow the entry of vaccinated travelers without requiring them to quarantine on arrival starting in mid-October. Since July 1, the government has reopened the tourist island of Phuket to fully vaccinated tourists under strict health conditions including staying on the island for 14 days while being tested for COVID-19. It had previously vaccinated most Phuket residents.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Thailand has reported 391,989 confirmed cases and 3,240 fatalities.

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