



Prime Minister and Defense Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha on 26 November 2020 delivered a speech updating the people on Thailand's direction for living with the global pandemic of COVID-19.

Here is his speech on the country's COVID-19 management progress.

Prime Minister's speech  
COVID-19 MANAGEMENT PROGRESS  
26 November 2020

Today, I wanted to update you on our country's direction in terms of living with the global pandemic that has devastated families and the economies of countries around the world.

The world is now in its worst resurgence of the COVID pandemic.

Hundreds of people are dying every day in countries in Europe and elsewhere, and even more in the USA, and there are protests and riots in almost 30 countries.

The WHO has recently warned that there could even be a third wave coming next year if countries are not disciplined in their approach to handling the crisis.

UK is now in partial lockdown. And just yesterday, it was just announced that the UK's economy will contract by around 11%.

France closed for a national lockdown on 30th October, with their GDP forecast to shrink by 11% in 2020.

Spain declared a state of emergency which may last for months, as well as a nationwide curfew, with travelling and gatherings limited.

Netherlands is in partial lockdown and people are instructed to avoid unnecessary travelling.

Belgium is in lockdown.

And in Germany, restaurants are closed in a partial lockdown and gatherings restricted.

The health situation, as well as its impact on the economies of countries, is getting even more serious around the world.

The danger of this virus is not just in the people it kills directly. If it gets out of control, it will also kill many other people who are dependent on hospital and medical care. When hospital beds are full of COVID patients, and doctors and nurses are fully occupied with treating COVID patients, people suffering from many other illnesses may not get the treatment that they depend on. It is a nightmare situation when doctors have to decide who to treat and who they simply do not have time to assist. We have avoided that situation and we must continue to be firm to avoid it in the future.

I would like to thank all citizens in every part of the country and in all occupations and businesses who have sacrificed tremendously and tried to manage their very difficult circumstances so that we could protect our nation. Your sacrifices are helping us avoid falling into an even worse situation as we are seeing happen in many other countries.

I would also like to thank the WHO for recognizing Thailand as one of the best examples in the world for its whole-of-government, whole-of-society, comprehensive approach to containing the virus and saying that our good results were not coincidental. I would like everyone in Thailand to take pride in this exceptional recognition and to continue to work together in the spirit of national unity that we have all shown in these difficult times.

**Let me now report to you that we are preparing for the next phase in managing the COVID crisis so that it does not do even greater damage to our country's economy and people's livelihoods.**

The long-term solution to overcoming the crisis of the COVID pandemic is the availability and use of a vaccine. There are now several vaccine candidates in advanced stages of development and safety testing and certification. We know that many advanced countries have been locking up their place in the queue for a vaccine. Thailand, too, must be able to get sufficient doses of a successful vaccine early.

That is why, a few months ago, I made the decision for Thailand to seek to partner in vaccine production with an eminent vaccine research group as a way of securing a vaccine early.

Last month we signed an agreement with Oxford University and AstraZeneca to produce vaccines in Thailand should their research lead to a successful vaccine. And tomorrow, we will sign a further agreement on the purchase of vaccines.

Just a few days ago, we heard the wonderful news that the Oxford University-AstraZeneca team announced that the vaccine they are developing has been found to have between 70-90% efficacy.

Next to that, this particular type of vaccine is much cheaper to produce in mass quantities than some of the other advanced vaccine candidates. But even more importantly, it will be right for Thai

conditions. While other advanced vaccine candidates need to be kept in exceptionally cold temperatures of between minus20C to minus70C, this vaccine can be stored in regular refrigeration temperatures of +2C to +8C, which will make it easy for us to get it to everyone around Thailand rather than only have it available where there are specialized refrigeration facilities.

We expect this vaccine to be properly certified, approved for use and produced by the middle of next year. The sooner we can advance this timetable, the sooner we can open our doors to large numbers of visitors and begin the task of rebuilding our economy. I am now working on trying to find ways in which our processes may be accelerated so that we can get to mass vaccinations in Thailand sooner.

In the meantime, as we enter the holiday season, I ask everyone to keep up their guard and to continue with their discipline in wearing masks, their hand hygiene, and social distancing so that we may continue to work our way through this crisis and avoid the virus spreading in our country and causing even greater economic suffering.

Thank you.