

**Actions and measures taken by the National Assembly of Thailand
during the COVID-19 pandemic**

*As of June 9, 2020

1. COVID-19 measures taken during the legislative recess

On March 26, 2020, while the National Assembly of Thailand was under prorogation, a national state of emergency has been declared by the Government in order to control the spread of COVID-19, requiring the National Assembly to adjust its work process of the operation as well as modify its procedures in response to the public health concern at that time.

To begin with, all meetings of parliamentary committees in both chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate, were allowed to be held on the basis of necessity and encouraged to limit the number of participants down to a minimum, except for the ad-hoc committees that are tasked to work within a fixed time frame.

Before the end of the recess of the legislative branch, several standing committees of both Houses switched to virtual meetings using remote platforms such as Cisco Webex Meeting, Zoom Cloud Meeting and LINE application. Meanwhile, over 50 percent of parliamentary staff had been allowed to work from home during March 25 to May 15, 2020, depending on the nature of their jobs, using remote working tools as well as virtual meetings.

At the beginning of the coronavirus global outbreak, the President of the National Assembly has announced that all types of overseas trips by Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff be banned, including working visits, study visits, international conferences and other non-essential travels. Parliamentary officers who returned from the listed countries at risk were also ordered to be self-quarantined for 14 days, though without any symptoms.

2. COVID-19 measures taken during a legislative session

As the new ordinary legislative session has begun since May 22, 2020, necessary precautionary measures have been introduced in the context of COVID-19 such as social distancing, limiting numbers of MPs' support staff, and new seating arrangement for MPs. For example, in the plenary chambers as well as parliamentary committees meeting rooms, each person must keep 1-2 meter distance to observe social distancing requirement. Session must finish prior to 8.00 pm to comply with the current curfew commencing April 3, 2020.

MPs, parliamentary staff, the press, and visitors are required to wear face masks and have their body temperatures checked before entering the parliamentary buildings as well as maintain their personal hygiene while inside the parliament. Thermal scanners, infrared thermometers and UV disinfection tunnels have been set up at all entrances for this purpose. A special medical team is tasked with monitoring this screening process and will promptly send anyone with high body temperature to the COVID-19 specialized hospitals for further examination. All tours of the parliamentary buildings and other non-essential visits are temporarily suspended, while Thai citizens who come for petitions are still welcomed. Furthermore, the smartphone-based special application was introduced to help track people in and out of the parliamentary buildings. QR codes are posted at all entrances to ensure that all visitors follow this procedure properly.

Many sensitive areas in the parliamentary buildings such as elevators, escalators, toilets, and cafeteria, as well as furniture and equipment are kept cleaned and sanitized by alcohol-based spray or disinfecting wipes twice a day. Hand sanitizers are also provided at various locations inside the parliamentary buildings.

3. Legislative actions in response to COVID-19

On June 2, 2020, the National Assembly endorsed three Emergency Decrees to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, allowing relevant authorities to provide special allowance to those affected by the pandemic, stabilizing the financial system, and rehabilitating the economy. The House of Representatives is also discussing on forming an ad-hoc committee to oversee the COVID-19 recovery programs by the Government.

Another Emergency Decree on electronic meetings was also approved by the National Assembly recently, enabling both the public and private sector to convene board meetings or shareholders meetings using digital medias. In addition to this, the House of Representatives is currently in the process of amending its own regulations to provide legal basis for online meetings.
