

**COVID-19 LOCKDOWN
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)
DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION**

A. Scope

This Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for a Lockdown in the context of preventing the spread of COVID-19 shall apply to the Department of Immigration (DoI), Immigration Office - Paro International Airport (IO-PIA) and Regional Immigration Offices (RIOs) at Samtse, Phuentsholing, Gelephu and Samdrup Jongkhar. The purpose of the SOP is to provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Immigration in the event of a Lockdown.

B. Key roles and responsibilities

2. In the event of a Lockdown, the key roles and responsibilities of DoI, IO-PIA and RIOs shall be to:

- a) man all interior, up-country and border checkpoints throughout the country to enforce the Lockdown;
- b) monitor and conduct surveillance, particularly of informal/illegal routes, in coordination with other Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) throughout the country;
- c) maintain heightened vigilance and stringent checking within the country for illegal immigrants;
- d) coordinate, support and work closely with other LEAs to enforce the Lockdown; and
- e) submit daily updates on important developments/incidents/matters to DoI.

C. International Ports of Entry/Exit (Land)

3. DoI and RIOs shall enforce/implement the following at all designated international Ports of Entry/Exit (Land) at Samtse, Phuentsholing, Gelephu and Samdrup Jongkhar as well as at all other land border crossings throughout the country.

- a) Entry/Exit of vehicles and individuals shall be prohibited with the exception of duly authorized personnel and their vehicles such as those engaged for import of

essential items, emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) and armed forces/law enforcement personnel.

- b) Exit of foreigners shall be facilitated, if approved by the Royal Government.
- c) Entry/Exit records (CID/Passport/Voter Card) of all individuals shall be verified and diligently recorded.
- d) Token issued by the Ministry of Health shall be verified.

D. Paro International Airport

4. DoI and IO-PIA shall ensure the following at Paro International Airport during a Lockdown.

- a) Entry/Exit of duly authorized personnel and airline crew members operating inbound/outbound flights for emergency purposes shall be facilitated.
- b) Exit of foreigners shall be facilitated, if approved by the Royal Government.
- c) Entry/Exit records (CID/Passport/Voter Card) of all individuals shall be verified and diligently recorded.

E. Up-Country and Interior Checkpoints

5. The Department of Immigration shall ensure the following at all up-country and interior checkpoints throughout the country.

- a) Movement of all individuals and their vehicles shall be prohibited with the exception of duly authorized personnel and their vehicles such as those engaged for transporting essential items, emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) and armed forces/law enforcement personnel.
- b) Movement of duly authorized personnel and their vehicles shall be facilitated. Records of all such movement shall be verified and maintained.
- c) Exit of foreigners shall be facilitated, if approved by the Royal Government.
- d) Token issued by the Ministry of Health shall be verified.

F. General

6. DoI, IO-PIA and RIOs, as may be applicable, shall also ensure the following:
- a) Strict vigilance and regular patrolling (foot and mobile) along the international border, particularly along areas that have informal/illegal routes shall be carried out with in close coordination with other law enforcement agencies and the armed forces.
 - b) Illegal immigrants who are apprehended shall be promptly deported.
 - c) Any person aiding, abetting, harboring and/or transporting illegal immigrants shall be liable for prosecution in a court of law in accordance with the Immigration Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan and other applicable laws.
 - d) Thorough briefing on the “rules of engagement” shall be provided to officers and staff. No officer or staff of DoI, IO-PIA or RIO shall engage in any kind of physical/verbal abuse or mistreatment when discharging responsibilities.
 - e) Mobile inspections shall be carried out within the country to ensure that foreigners inside the country comply with the Lockdown.
 - f) Full support and cooperations shall be provided to RBP and other LEAs.
 - g) Provisions outlined in this SOP shall be scaled down/contextualized and applied to a particular region or Dzongkhag or Dungkhag or Thromde in the event of a regional/partial Lockdown.
 - h) If required, additional up-country and/or interior checkpoints shall be set-up to effectively enforce a Lockdown at the national, regional, Dzongkhag, Dungkhag or Thromde level.
 - i) All provisions of a Lockdown shall be faithfully and diligently enforced in good faith.

**Department of Immigration
31 March 2020**
