

One million digital boxes for learning

90% of state schools ready to open doors

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More than one million digital TV boxes will be distributed to schools under three state agencies to support online and distance learning during the Covid-19 outbreak in the kingdom.

Government spokesperson Narumon Pinyosinwat yesterday said after the weekly cabinet meeting that the body has acknowledged the educational management needs for schools raised by the Office of the Basic Education Commission (Obec) in light of the pandemic.

The schools would adopt the use of digital technology to provide online and on-air learning sessions to continue to provide safety for students, parents and teachers, Ms Narumon said.

She noted that the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) will purchase 1,158,931 digital TV boxes for the initiative.

Of them, 1,030,798 boxes are expected to be allocated to schools under the Education Ministry, 127,867 to learning centres under the Interior Ministry and 266 to academies under the Royal Thai Police.

The government will also subsidise meals for students learning at home, Ms Narumon said, adding more subsidies will be provided for the procurement of online learning tools and protective equipment for students.

According to Ms Narumon, schools during the pandemic can teach classes on-site, on-air or online, depending on individual situations.

Regarding migrant students from neighbouring countries, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has said that they will not yet be allowed to re-enter Thailand until stricter measures are introduced.

The government is now considering the many aspects of education under the Covid-19 situation, including homeschooling, online learning, time adjustments and overlapping school hours, Gen Prayut said.

Over 90% of public schools in the kingdom are ready for reopening, according to the Public Health Ministry.

Panpimol Wipulakorn, chief of the Department of Health, said 33,597 of 38,450 public schools joined the department's "Thai Stop Covid" platform to check whether they've done enough to meet Covid-19 safety standards before being allowed to reopen by the government.

"We have found that 94.19% of the participating schools have already passed our 20 main and 24 secondary [checks] so they can resume classes," Dr Panpimol said.

She noted that most schools still have problems ensuring social distancing, but the Health Department has provided guidelines for them.

Dr Panpimol said health volunteer groups will be formed to give advice to schools on how to protect students from the deadly virus.

According to the department's guidelines, schools can be closed if new cases are detected.