

Press Release by Bureau of Information, Ministry of Public Health
June 18, 2015

Thailand announced its first confirmed case of MERS-CoV infection

On June 18, 2015, the Ministry of Public Health announced that the first case of MERS was found in Thailand. The patient is a traveler from a Middle East country and he is being taken care of in an isolation room at Bamrasnaradura Infectious Disease Institute. Fifty nine contact persons of this patient were followed and investigated. Thailand has established surveillance and response systems for rapid detection and effective management of MERS, the systems are functioning well with good coordination between the public and private sectors. At present, the patient and all contacts are identified and control measures can be applied. There is no cause for panic to the general public. The people should always do hygienic practices, whereas the individuals with chronic health conditions should avoid travelling to areas with active MERS transmission. Additional information can be obtained through Department of Disease Control Hotline 1422.

On June 18th, 18.00 at the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), Nonthaburi, Professor Rajata Rajatanavin, the Minister of Public Health, with Dr. Surachet Sathitniramai, acting Permanent Secretary, and other key MOPH staff, held a media conference on the outcome of MERS surveillance. Since January 2015 a total of 36 suspect cases had been investigated and were found all negative for MERS CoV infection. However, today the first confirmed case of MERS was identified. He is a Middle East male in his 70's, now admitted at Bamrasnaradura Infectious Disease Institute.

This patient came from a Middle East country seeking for treatment of heart disease at a private hospital. On arrival on 15 June 2015, without fever, he was admitted to the hospital for heart disease treatment. While taking care of this patient, the private hospital exercised strict infection control practices, including patient isolation and proper clinical sample taking for laboratory testing as recommended by MOPH and WHO, in close coordination with MOPH. The patient was later referred to Barasnaradura Infectious Disease Institute, and was confirmed positive for MERS by laboratory tests at two different laboratories on

18 June. Now the patient is under the care, in special isolation room, at Bamrasnaradura Infectious Disease Institute. His health conditions are stable and his accompanying relatives are under observation and quarantine.

Currently, 59 persons that have been in contact with this patient directly and indirectly were identified and were put under close follow-up. Close contacts are kept under observation at hospitals, while other low risk contacts are advised to stay home and they will be called or visited daily by health workers. These measures are taken under the provisions of the Communicable Disease Control Act B.E. 2523, as MERS has been declared a Dangerous Communicable Disease under this Act.

At present, the control measures could be implemented according to the standard of care, there is no cause the Thai people to panic. This first case of MERS came from abroad for medical treatment in the country. The National public health surveillance system is sensitive to early detect imported MERS cases and contain the spread of disease. Similar incidents were seen in other countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines where MERS cases were imported but well contained in the hospital, so that there was no further spread of the disease. Thai general public are advised to observe hygienic practices of “eating cooked food, using serving spoons, and washing hands frequently”. Persons with chronic diseases should avoid travel to areas with active transmission of MERS CoV. Travelers to MERS affected countries should avoid contact with sick persons and camels and avoid drinking raw camel milk. On returning home from MERS affected countries, if one develops symptoms of illness such as fever, cough, runny nose or sore throat, he or she should wear face mask and seek medical attention immediately. Awareness and good cooperation of the people will enable effective management of MERS threats in the country. For queries or additional information please call Department of Disease Control hot line 1422.