

# REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

January 12 - 18, 2023

## WEEKLY EVENTS

- January 16, 2023 of every year is "Rajpracha Samasai" day. This year, the Ministry of Public Health started a weeklong campaign from January 16-22 to raise leprosy awareness. Suspected patients and close contacts are recommended to observe their symptoms and undergo a medical examination in order to mitigate long-term effects.
- The Bridge the Gap Foundation sent a group of medical professionals from the Netherlands to perform cleft lip and palate surgery for approximately 150 children at Mahosot Hospital in Vientiane, Lao PDR from January 12 – 27, 2023. Local doctors and nurses from Mahosot Hospital will help with registration, surgery, postoperative care, and communication between patients, relatives and hospital staff. Domestic funding has been raised to support the project to cover expenses for patients and relatives throughout the period of treatment.
- On January 12, 2023, a permanent checkpoint was opened connecting Mae Sot District, Tak Province - Myawaddy Province, Myanmar for citizens and tourists to travel across the first Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge. Meanwhile, the permanent border checkpoint connecting Mae Sai District, Chiang Rai Province and Tachilek Province, Myanmar remains closed until the next official order.

## FROM MONKEYS TO HUMANS **KNOWLESI MALARIA**

The Department of Disease Control's disease surveillance report from January 9-15, 2023 confirmed one case of malaria caused by *Plasmodium knowlesi* was detected in a 34-year-old Thai man in Ra-Ngae District, Narathiwat Province. The patient had occupational risks as a border patrol police officer who regularly worked in forested areas. *Plasmodium knowlesi* is a malaria parasite in monkeys, and is one of the species that causes malaria in humans. Disease transmission occurs when the vector, *Anopheles* mosquitoes, bite infected monkeys, and then bite humans. In the human body, *P. knowlesi* replicates faster when compared to other malaria species. Monkeys that are known to carry *P. knowlesi* in Thailand are Southern pig-tailed macaques, Indochinese rhesus macaques, stump-tailed macaques, crab-eating macaques, and Assam macaques.

Since 2004 in Thailand, about 10 human cases have been reported per year. But in the first half of 2022, about 70 cases were found. This is a zoonotic disease that is considered to be the fifth type of malaria that can cause death in humans. Malaria in general remains a national public health problem and is especially common in border provinces, high mountainous areas, dense forests, and nearby water sources and streams, which are breeding grounds for *Anopheles* mosquitoes. People who cannot avoid travel to these high-risk areas should prioritize prevention measures to reduce the risk of disease.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Public health officials should coordinate with related agencies to promote awareness to the community, especially among risk groups such as those who work in and around forested areas, people like migrant groups who travel around border areas on a regular basis, and school children. People should understand basic knowledge about the disease occurrence, symptoms, and prevention measures. If symptoms are compatible with malaria, people should see a doctor and inform them of their risk history. Officials should emphasize the importance of completing the prescribed medical course on time with the correct dosage. Cases should be prepared to undergo blood tests as scheduled by the doctor.

## INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

Multisectoral Capacity Development Program for Public Health Emergency Detection and Response in Border Areas

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## Sources

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