

Special Announcement of the COVID-19 on 15 February 2020

1. The situation on 15 February 2020 at 8.00 A.M.

1. There are currently 20 confirmed cases of novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) being treated in hospitals and 14 cases who returned to their homes, which brings the total number of novel coronavirus infection cases detected in Thailand to 34.

2. From 3 January to 14 February 2020, the total number of patients under investigation (PUI) increased to 804 people. Of those, 54 PUI were detected from the airport screening and 750 people sought medical services on their own at hospitals, and 685 cases returned to their homes and under the investigation. Most of the PUI were infected with seasonal influenza, and 119 PUI are admitted at hospitals.

3. Regarding the international situation involving 27 countries and two administrative regions between 5 January to 15 February 2020 at 7.00 A.M., there were 67,100 confirmed cases and 1,526 deaths, with 66,492 cases and 1,523 deaths coming from the People's Republic of China.

4. The Ministry of Public Health needs the cooperation from the public to follow its recommendations. People should wear clean cloth hygienic masks when in crowded areas. The patients or people who have symptoms of coughing or sneezing should wear surgical masks to prevent the spread of infection. The staff who have close contact with the patients should wear an N95 mask.

2. The Ministry of Public Health found one confirmed case of COVID-19 among health care workers.

The Ministry of Public Health found one confirmed case of COVID-19 among health care workers. The health care workers should strictly follow the measures of prevention and control of infection to prevent spread from patients. MoPH is preparing to provide further training of infection control for staff across Thailand.

Dr. Suwannachai Wattanayingcharoenchai, Director-General and his team stated that with the current COVID-19 situation, there was one COVID-19 case who returned home; a female 56 year-old Chinese tourist. The total number of patients discharged from hospitals and returned back homes is 14. The total number of patients still in hospitals is 20.

Two confirmed cases were in critical condition with severe symptoms since being admitted at Bamrasnaradura Infectious Disease Institute. The first case has critical respiratory system symptoms and the medical doctors have used an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) with a ventilator. The second case has a comorbidity of pulmonary tuberculosis. Both cases were treated with convalescent plasma as additional treatment. Now, both cases are stable and their oxygen exchange rates of blood have improved. Other confirmed cases have also improved.

Yesterday (14 February 2020), a meeting of an expert group in emerging infectious diseases in three areas (clinical management, epidemiology, and laboratory) reported one new case. The new case was a 35 year-old female health care worker, and had close contacts with the 27th confirmed case. She was on the monitored list and categorized as a high risk close contact of the surveillance system of the disease control investigation team. Before she showed symptoms, she was being tested in accordance with surveillance guidelines. Results of the investigation showed that the new case did not wear a surgical mask and personal protective equipment while providing patient care, at that time



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the patient whom she took care was diagnosed with another disease (not COVID-19) . Later, the index patient displayed symptoms such as fever, cough and fatigue and tested positive for the COVID-19. The investigation team has extended surveillance results to 24 other colleagues of this health care worker and all 24 colleagues were also at high risk of the 27th patient. All of them (24 colleagues) tested negative for the virus causing COVID-19 and showed no symptoms. The new confirmed case who is the health care worker lives in a dormitory alone, there are no family members who had close contact with her.

However, the infection among health care workers has already been found elsewhere. China NHC reported on 14 February 2020 that a total of 1,716 Chinese healthcare workers had contracted the COVID-19 by 11 February 2020, accounting for 3.8% of the overall confirmed cases in China. Six of them died and accounted for 0.4% of the total fatality rate in China.

The MoPH recommended healthcare workers and public health officers to strictly comply with the infection control measures. Particularly, staff taking care of confirmed COVID-19 patients need to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment.

Hospitals shall have the standard infection control and should frequently review the infection control measures/guidelines in order to prevent the transmission from patients to the health care workers. In addition, there will be training courses for all medical doctors and infection control nurses across the country again on 19 February 2020. The main target trainees are staff working at private hospitals in tourist attraction provinces.

Above all, MoPH emphasized that COVID-19 will be spread through droplets and people can get the infection if they are close to patients coughing or sneezing and contact the secretions such as nasal discharge, saliva and mucus through membrane of eyes, mouth and nose within a distance of 1-2 meters. Therefore, people are recommended to frequently wash hands.

For tourists traveling from the Westerdam cruise, nine of them (eight foreigners and one Thai) arrived at Suvarnabhumi Airport yesterday. No one had fever after getting through the screening protocol; so, all foreigners travelled back to their countries and the Thai person is being closely monitored according to the disease prevention and control standards.

Today is the 11th day of disease surveillance for the Thai citizens returning from Wuhan. One confirmed case at Chon Buri Hospital is in good condition without fever, coughing or nasal discharge. The case is still in an isolation room and is still being continuously monitored. The results of the specimen were sent to the laboratory on 14 February 2020 and revealed a positive result. The specimens will be collected again for laboratory testing on 16 February 2020. As for the Thai people at the Sattahip Naval Base, 137 people were all well with no fever and no one met the criteria of PUI.

3. The results of implementation at Health Control

From 3-23 January 2020, the Department of Disease Control has been implementing the surveillance protocol by fever screening of arrival passengers of direct flights from Wuhan, China at the Suvarnabhumi, Don Mueang, Chiang Mai, Phuket and Krabi airports. On 24 January, the screening protocol began to be implemented at Chiang Rai Airport. The screening protocol has expanded to cover all arrival and departure flights from China at Suvarnabhumi Airport from 29 January to 14 February 2020. There were a total of 799 flights and 64,357 passengers and air crew members that were screened for the disease. For more effective screening throughout 24 hours, MoPH has also provided staff to assist the health officers at points of entry.

- For the screening protocol outside the airports, there were 44,200 people that were screened



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at five sea ports (Bangkok, Laem Chabang, Chiang Saen, Phuket and Samui) since 1 January and 393,788 people at the ground ports.

- All passengers will receive a Health Beware Card from immigration officers and health officers at health control.

4. The daily recommendation for preventing COVID-19

It is recommended to frequently wash hands with water and soap or use alcohol gel, avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and strictly comply with the recommendations “eating cooked food, using serving spoons and washing hands.”