



Novel Coronavirus 2019 Pneumonia News release

by Emergency Operation Center, Department of Disease Control

Special Announcement of COVID-19 on 21 February 2020

1. The situation on 21 February 2020 at 8.00 am.

1. There are currently 16 confirmed cases of novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) being treated in hospitals and 19 cases who returned to their homes, which brings the total number of novel coronavirus infection cases detected in Thailand to 35.

2. From 3 January to 21 February 2020 at 11.00 A.M., the total number of patients under investigation (PUI) increased to 1,151 people. Of those, 58 PUI were detected from the airport screening and 1,093 people sought medical services on their own at hospitals. 941 cases returned to their homes. Most of the PUI were infected with seasonal influenza, and 210 PUI are admitted at hospitals.

3. Regarding the international situation involving 28 countries and two administrative regions between 5 January to 21 February 2020 at 7.00 A.M., there were 76,202 confirmed cases and 2,247 deaths, with 75,000 cases and 2,236 deaths coming from the People's Republic of China.

2. The Ministry of Public Health reported good news. Two confirmed cases can go back home and specimens of the first two confirmed cases can be used to develop a COVID-19 test kit/vaccine.

The Ministry of Public Health reported that two confirmed cases can go back home. The Department of Medical Sciences will take the specimens from the first two confirmed cases in Thailand, who allowed use of their specimens to develop a COVID-19 test kit and vaccine. Moreover, the MOPH shared the specimens with the World Health Organization to further the world's benefit.

Dr. Opas Karnkawinpong, the Director-General of the Department of Medical Sciences, Dr. Tanarak Plipat, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Disease Control, Dr. Pramote Sathianrat, Deputy Director-General of the the Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine, and Dr Rungruang Kitpati, Ministry Advisor and spokesman of the MOPH joined together and said that two Chinese men, a 56 year-old and a 34 year-old, recovered at Bamrasnaradura Infectious Diseases Institute (BIDI) and returned to their homes. Currently, 16 confirmed cases are being treated at BIDI, and 19 cases were discharged. For patients who received treatment using an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), they are now stable and had negative laboratory results for the virus that causes COVID-19.

The patient with a comorbidity of tuberculosis is in stable condition, but still tests positive for the virus that causes COVID-19. Both of the two severe cases are still on respirators and need to be monitored continuously. Currently, Thai scientists from several agencies have jointly conducted laboratory experiments and they found that *Andrographis paniculata* extract can inhibit growth of the virus in vitro. This could potentially be further developed against the virus that causes COVID-19, if further results are satisfactory.

The coronavirus super-spreader, which has been reported in another country, contains large numbers of the virus and rapidly spread to other people, and without being able to control the spread. This kind of situation has not yet happened in Thailand due to a strong surveillance system which can detect patients under investigation and can promptly isolate patients to prevent the transmission of infection.

Moreover, Thailand has the Communicable Diseases Act, B.E. 2558 (2015) which allows communicable disease control officers to compel suspected cases to come seek treatment. The MOPH asked for public confidence and cooperation with the government for their safety. For monitoring of the Diamond Princess situation, three Thai passengers and crew members, were all negative for the virus that causes COVID-19 and they have disembarked the cruise ship.



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The MOPH emphasized that there are still no restrictions for traveling to outbreak areas. If travel to outbreak areas is necessary, please take care of yourself by frequently washing hands with soap and alcohol gel, wearing a mask, and avoiding visits to crowded places. When returning to Thailand, everyone will be screened at the airport. If you have no sign of fever and symptoms that do not meet a criteria of surveillance, you will be allowed to return home. However, if anyone develops symptoms including fever, coughing and runny nose within 14 days of return, please seek medical care at the hospital immediately and inform your travel history to medical doctors. If the symptoms meet the disease surveillance criteria, those patients will be further investigated at the hospital.

Dr. Opart Karnkwinpong, Director-General of the Department of Medical Science (DMSC) stated that the DMSC collected specimens from the first and the second confirmed COVID-19 cases for genetic sequencing. The results of the aforementioned sequencing can be developed for Real time RT-PCR test kits for viral detection and development of a vaccine. Above all, Thailand has realized the benefit of the global community, therefore, has shared the COVID-19 specimens with the WHO for further development and research.

In addition, Thailand has accelerated the development of a network of laboratories to cope with emergency outbreaks in 14 provinces nationwide. By starting at the 13 medical science centers, the Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital, Ramathibodi Hospital and Chulalongkorn University, Rajavithi Hospital, Bamrasnaradura Infectious Diseases Institute and Bumrungrad Hospital, it will expand to regional/general hospitals (at least one laboratory in each province) throughout the country. From 5 January to 20 February 2020, the Department of Medical Sciences performed laboratory tests to detect the virus causing COVID-19 from a total of 1,489 specimens.

Dr. Pramote Sathianrat, Deputy Director-General of the the Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine, said that the the Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicines has cooperated with the Department of Medical Sciences and the Government Pharmaceutical Organization. On Tuesday 25 February 2020, there will be a cooperation signing to study the possibility of extraction of active ingredients from *Andrographis paniculata* (Fa Ta Lai Chone) as well as other herbal medicines to understand the mechanism of the effectiveness of Thai herbs against the virus causing COVID-19. Previous studies about Fa Ta Lai Chone extract has shown antiviral broad spectrum effects, such as preventing the virus from entering the cell, boosting immunity, and anti-inflammatory effects. It has been used in the treatment of upper respiratory tract infections.

Today, the Ministry of Public Health has organized a campaign to educate the public about COVID-19, to provide knowledge on disease prevention. To strictly comply with the recommendations, "eat cooked food, use serving spoons, wash hands and wear hygienic masks" have been taught to the people at Wat Pho School Tha Tian and Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen Province. The MOPH has also organized a campaign to clean the premises at Wat Pho Tha Tien and the Richmond Hotel, Nonthaburi province.

3. The daily recommendations for preventing COVID-19

It is recommended to frequently wash hands with water and soap or alcohol gel, avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth if not necessary, strictly comply with the recommendations "eat cooked food, use serving spoons and wash hands," and 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. Staff and healthcare workers who have close contact with patients should wear an N95 mask.