



Novel Coronavirus 2019 Pneumonia News release

by Emergency Operation Center, Department of Disease Control

Special Announcement of COVID-19 on 22 February 2020

1. The situation on 22 February 2020 at 8.00 a.m.

1. There are currently 15 confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) being treated in hospitals and 20 cases who returned to their homes, which brings the total number of coronavirus disease infection cases detected in Thailand to 35.

2. From 3 January to 22 February 2020 at 11.00 A.M., the total number of patients under investigation (PUI) increased to 1,252 people. Of those, 60 PUI were detected from the airport screening and 1,192 people sought medical services on their own at hospitals. 1,006 cases returned to their homes. Most of the PUI were infected with seasonal influenza, and 246 PUI are admitted at hospitals.

3. Regarding the international situation involving 30 countries and two administrative regions between 5 January to 22 February 2020 at 7.00 A.M., there were 77,286 confirmed cases and 2,252 deaths, with 75,903 cases and 2,237 deaths coming from the People's Republic of China.

2. The Ministry of Public Health reported one confirmed case was discharged from the hospital and can go back home

The Ministry of Public Health reported that a Thai patient from Wuhan that was treated at Chonburi Hospital can go back home. The MOPH advises people to avoid traveling to countries that have local transmission. If people need to travel to an outbreak country, they should protect themselves by washing their hands, wearing hygienic masks and avoiding living in crowded areas.

Dr. Taweasin Visanuyothin, Spokesman of the Ministry of Public Health, Dr. Tanarak Plipat, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Disease Control and Dr. Narong Aphikulvanich, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Medical Services stated about the COVID-19 situation today that one confirmed case who is a 24 year-old Thai man who was treated at Chonburi Hospital can go back home. He is one of the 138 Thai people in the group who came back from Wuhan. Currently, 20 cases were discharged and can go back home, 15 confirmed cases are being treated at hospitals and the total number of confirmed cases is 35. There has been no report of additional patients and most of them are improving. Medical practitioner teams are closely taking care of the patient who received treatment using an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) and the patient with tuberculosis who are now stable and still in the intensive care unit (ICU).

Today marks the 50th day that Thailand began implementing surveillance measures to prevent COVID-19. Thailand started screening travelers from disease transmission areas on 3 January 2020. At that time, there was no report of human-to-human transmission. The public can be confident in the disease surveillance and control system in Thailand. Until now, the MOPH has been implementing intense measures. Thailand is the first country to start screening at the airport for direct flights from transmission areas. Thus, Thailand was the first country that detected the first confirmed case outside the People's Republic of China. The government has activated the national Emergency Operations Center and set up Thailand's national emerging infectious diseases control committee that has the prime minister serving as the chairman. The committee agreed upon the integration plan of multilateral cooperation for security and to mitigate the impact caused by COVID-19. Moreover, there is a preparation plan if Thailand enters Phase 3, which means there is widespread infection in the country. Although the situation is currently in Phase 2, the Ministry of Public Health and related agencies have jointly implemented intensive surveillance measures to screen travelers not only at the airports but



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also ports, and border crossings. There's also local surveillance focusing on eight provinces popular for tourism.

Dr. Tanarak further added that the current overall risk in the country is very low. However, it is still important to be fully aware of the situation and surveillance system to extend the period of rising number of patients if COVID-19 as long as possible. The important thing is cooperation and understanding among Thai people to not panic, not believe in fake news, and not share rumors. Checking information before sharing and following the recommendations of the Ministry of Public Health are also very critical.

Regardless of how **long** the virus that causes COVID-19 may **survive** in the environment, the MOPH is working towards preventing infection. If anyone has a fever with coughing, sneezing or a runny nose, it is recommended to stay at home, and wear a mask when seeking medical care at the hospital. For the general public without a fever, they should wash hands frequently, avoid touching their face, mouth and nose, and not visit crowded places. High risk groups (i.e. people working with tourists) can protect themselves by wearing a mask. If anyone has symptoms including fever, coughing, sneezing or a runny nose, please seek medical care at the hospital immediately.

People traveling to ongoing outbreak areas in accordance with the WHO announcement should comply with the following recommendations:

1. Before traveling, it is recommended to study the disease prevention information and update the outbreak situation of destination countries through DDC or WHO websites. Unnecessary trips to ongoing outbreak countries should be avoided or postponed. If it is necessary to travel, please prepare protective equipment such as a mask and alcohol gel and read carefully how to prevent yourself from infection.

2. During their trips, travelers are recommended to take care of themselves, especially while visiting public and crowded places. Frequently washing hands, wearing a mask, and avoiding touching eyes and nose are recommended. If anyone has an illness during their trip, please contact the embassy and request them for assistance.

3. When returning to Thailand, there is no policy to quarantine travelers at the airport. However, the screening protocol has been implemented among passengers and they need to monitor symptoms for 14 consecutive days. If the passenger has an illness during entry to Thailand, the person will be isolated for further investigation and referred to a designated hospital. For a person without any symptoms, a health beware card will be provided. If someone returns home and develops suspected symptoms, the person will be asked to wear a mask, to check the temperature for fever every day, not to use personal stuff with others, and not to use public transportation. If the symptoms do not improve, see a doctor immediately and inform the medical provider of their travel history or call the Department of Disease Control hotline 1422.

Regarding the order of many agencies to prohibit staff of their organizations to travel to countries where the epidemic is ongoing, people should not panic. The order is the concern of each organization. The Ministry of Public Health does not prohibit official staff traveling abroad, but please consider delaying or postponing the trip during this period to reduce the risk of infection.

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



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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.