

Special Announcement of COVID-19 on 23 February 2020

1. The situation on 23 February 2020 at 8.00 a.m.

1. There are currently 14 confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) being treated in hospitals and 21 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 23 February 2020 at 11.00 A.M., the total number of patients under investigation (PUI) increased to 1,355 people. Of those, 68 PUI were detected from the airport screening and 1,287 people sought medical services on their own at hospitals. 1,071 cases returned to their homes. Most of the PUI were infected with seasonal influenza, and 284 PUI are admitted at hospitals.

3. Regarding the international situation involving 30 countries and two administrative regions between 5 January to 23 February 2020 at 7.00 A.M., there were 78,673 confirmed cases and 2,459 deaths, with 76,932 cases and 2,441 deaths coming from the People's Republic of China.

2. One more case of COVID-19 recovered and returned to their home.

The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) said that a Chinese woman infected with SARS-COV-2 returned home. From the strict screening in all ports of entry, a total of 3 million people have been screened.

Dr. Sukhum Karnjanapimai - Permanent Secretary of MOPH, Dr. Suwannachai Wattanayingcharoenchai - Director General of the Department of Disease Control (DDC), Dr. Opas Karnkawinpong - Director General of the Department of Medical Sciences, and Dr. Tanarak Plipat - Deputy Director of DDC joined together regarding the COVID-19 update in Thailand.

Dr. Sukhum said that today, a 54-year-old woman Chinese who was treated at Bamrasnaradura Infectious Diseases Institute (BIDI) was discharged from the hospital. The total number of discharged cases are 21 cases (60% of the 35 COVID-19 cases). For the 14 currently admitted cases, most of them are improving. The patient who received treatment using an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) and the patient with tuberculosis are now stable and still in use respirators.

WHO is still not recommending any restrictions for travel to countries with COVID-19 outbreaks and also does not have specific measures for international travelers. Thailand, as a member of the World Health Organization, has carried out measures in accordance with WHO recommendations and enhanced surveillance and screening measures for international travelers at all points of entry including land border checkpoints, seaports and airports. Thailand also enhanced surveillance at all public and private hospitals.

However, Thailand's disease prevention and control cannot be achieved without the cooperation of the public. Therefore, people traveling from areas with reports of ongoing outbreaks or local transmission including the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Macau Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, Republic of China (Taiwan), Japan, Singapore, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), (a list of countries with report of outbreaks will be announced periodically for people to monitor the situation through the DDC website), are asked to take social responsibility by self-monitoring at least 14 days upon return, avoiding crowded places, avoiding using public transportation, and avoiding sharing personal household items. If you are feeling like you have symptoms, please wear a face mask and measure your temperature everyday. If the symptoms do not improve, seek medical care immediately and report your travel history or call the DDC hotline 1422.

Currently, parents are concerned about the infection of students and educational staff in schools and universities who just returned from traveling abroad. Many educational institutes

encouraged students and staff to check their health conditions and ask for medical certifications at the hospital before returning to the class at school. The MOPH realizes the importance of this issue but did not recommend staff and students to check their health conditions or ask for medical certifications at the hospital because of the following reasons:

1. Checking health conditions during the asymptomatic period is difficult to find signs of viral infection and a negative laboratory result in this period can not guarantee a possibility of the infection in future. Therefore, it is not necessary for people to be checked for the virus during the period without clinical signs.
2. Unnecessarily visiting the hospital will increase the opportunity to get an infection from the hospital and can allow the other pathogens to spread to patients in the hospital.
3. It is recommended to immediately seek medical advice at the hospital if anyone develops the suspected symptoms in accordance with the MOPH's announcement.

For educational institutions that have students traveling from affected areas, please do as follows:

1. Requesting cooperation from students, undergraduate/graduate students, and personnel traveling from areas with reported outbreaks to stay at home for 14 days (self-quarantine at home)
2. Educational institutions should have screening measures for students, undergraduate/graduate students, and personnel every day by checking fever and observing symptoms of cough and a runny nose to immediately separate to a prepared location
3. Students, undergraduate/graduate students, and personnel traveling from areas with reported outbreaks should observe their illness, refrain from going out in public where there are crowded places. Do not share personal stuff with others and check for fever every day. Do not use public transportation, as well. If the symptoms do not improve, wear a hygienic mask and immediately see a doctor and inform travel history or call the Department of Disease Control Hotline 1422.
4. Educational institutions should appoint health staff or health-promoting teachers in order to coordinate with public health officers in the area.
5. Educational institutions must provide sufficient hand-washing soap or alcohol gel for all students and officials.

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.