

Special Announcement of COVID-19 on 24 February 2020

1. The situation on 24 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 24 February 2020 at 11.00 A.M., the total number of patients under investigation (PUI) increased to 1,453 people. Of those, 68 PUI were detected from the airport screening and 1,385 people sought medical services on their own at hospitals. 1,121 cases returned to their homes. Most of the PUI were infected with seasonal influenza, and 332 PUI are admitted at hospitals.

3. Regarding the international situation involving 30 countries and two administrative regions between 5 January to 24 February 2020 at 7.00 A.M., there were 78,997 confirmed cases and 2,470 deaths, with 76,942 cases and 2,444 deaths coming from the People's Republic of China.

2. MOPH revealed negative results in a PUI in Mae Sot district; Do not trust fake news; screening continues.

The Ministry of Public Health revealed that a Chinese patient under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19 in Mae Sot, Tak province had negative results. People should receive their news only from the MOPH, and should not trust fake news. The MOPH is continuing screening in all ports of Thailand.

Dr. Sopon Iamsirithawon, the Director of the Division of Communicable Diseases, Dr. Rungrueng Kitphati, Advisor and spokesman of the Ministry of Public Health and Dr. Narong Aphikulvanich, Deputy Director General, Department of Medical Services stated about the COVID-19 situation that the Chinese man who met the criteria for investigation was admitted at Maesot Hospital with respiratory system symptoms. Two laboratory results were negative for the virus that causes COVID-19. He still remains in the hospital because he is in critical condition from an underlying chronic disease. Currently, all points of entry e.g. ground, sea and air still have continuous strict surveillance. Thailand has 35 confirmed cases, 21 confirmed cases have returned home and 14 confirmed cases still remain in the hospital. Thailand has the 9th most cases of all countries in the world.

However, the Ministry of Public Health has enhanced the criteria for surveillance, changing the criteria for risk areas, risk occupations and healthcare workers. The MoPH is following the situation and has changed the criteria four times. Currently, the MoPH is following Thai people who are back from COVID-19 transmission countries and increasing the surveillance areas.

Regarding the two severe cases who were being treated at Bamrasnaradura Institute, the patient who received treatment using an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) is in stable condition and performs response to stimulation responding well. The patient with a comorbidity of tuberculosis is in stable condition and being closely monitored by the medical team.

Laboratory investigation can now be performed at 13 medical science centers across the country and at laboratories in regional hospitals and provincial government hospitals. The central areas that laboratory investigation can be conducted include the Department of Medical Sciences, Rajavithi Hospital, Bamrasnaradura Infectious Disease Institute, Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital, Ramathibodi Hospital, and the Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University.

People who meet the criteria for PUI with fever, cough, runny nose, or respiratory symptoms and have travel history to **areas** affected by the **outbreak** are requested to immediately see a doctor or call the DDC hotline 1422 for free, 24 hours per day.

The virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread through mucous droplets of infected patients through coughing and sneezing and the virus may still remain on the surfaces of door knobs, elevator buttons, handrails and tables. However, this virus is not spreading through aerosol transmission, therefore, people can prevent the disease by eating cooked food, using a serving spoon, frequently washing hands, wearing a mask and avoiding visiting crowded places

In the meantime, Mr. Anuthin Charnveerakul, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Health Minister appreciated the good collaboration from the public who are complying with the MOPH's recommendations. This kind of collaboration can help to prevent disease transmission. In addition, the MoPH recommended passengers returning from outbreak areas to implement a self-quarantine for 14 days to ensure the safety of themselves, their family and community. People are also recommended not to believe in news from untrustworthy sources since fake news will increase the workload to the relevant officers. Therefore, the MoPH encouraged people to stop the rumors, not share fake news and update the outbreak situation through the MoPH's press releases which will be broadcasted every day on 11.00 A.M.

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

4. Risk Communication to the Public

4.1 If anyone has symptoms including fever, sore throat, respiratory tract infection symptoms such as runny nose, cough, reproductive cough, tachypnea or dyspnea within 14 days after departing from a risk or affected area, they should wear a hygienic mask, wash their hands and seek medical care at nearby hospital or meet public health officers immediately, and inform the healthcare workers regarding their travel history to reduce the risk of complications from pneumonia progressing to severe or fatal outcomes.

4.2 A person with an underlying disease should avoid traveling outbound, where there is an ongoing outbreak. If this is unavoidable, people should avoid making contact with patients who have respiratory symptoms, avoid visiting markets selling live animals and having close contact with animals, especially with sick or dead animals.

4.3 For the general public, please take care of yourself during seasonal changes and comply with the recommendations "eat cooked food, use serving spoons, wash hands," and wear masks while coughing, sneezing, and avoid making contact with patients who have respiratory symptoms.