

Special Announcement of COVID-19

on 28 February 2020

1. The situation on 28 February 2020 at 8.00 a.m.

1. There are currently 13 confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) being treated in hospitals and 28 cases who returned to their homes which brings the total number of coronavirus infection cases detected in Thailand to 41.

2. From 3 January to 28 February 2020, the total number of patients under investigation (PUI) increased to 2,437 people. Of those, 84 PUI were detected from all ports' screening and 2,353 people sought medical services on their own at hospitals. 1,446 cases returned to their homes and some of them are being monitored. Most of the PUI were infected with seasonal influenza, and 991 PUI are admitted at hospitals.

3. Regarding the international situation involving 50 countries and administrative regions between 5 January to 28 February 2020 at 7.00 A.M., there were 82,794 confirmed cases and 2,817 deaths, with 78,514 cases and 2,747 deaths coming from the People's Republic of China.

2. MOPH reported one confirmed case of COVID-19 was discharged and returned home, and confirmed one additional case of COVID-19 in Thailand, in someone who returned from South Korea.

Dr. Sukhum Karnchanapimai, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Health, Dr. Suwannachai Wattanayingcharoenchai, Director-General and their team stated about the COVID-19 situation that today, one COVID-19 case recovered and could go back home. He is a 30 year-old man who was discharged from the Central Chest Institute of Thailand. The MoPH received laboratory results from the Department of Medical Sciences and Chulalongkorn Hospital that confirmed one new case in a 25 year-old Thai male tour guide. He has a travel history to South Korea and was admitted to the hospital on 24 February 2020 with fever and cough. The laboratory results were positive and he is currently being treated at Bamrasnaradura Infectious Diseases Institute. The health officer has followed two close contacts and travel companions and close contacts on the airplane are being followed up. Currently, the officer sent the information to the parties involved.

Currently, 28 confirmed cases were discharged from the hospital, 13 cases still remain in the hospital and the total number of confirmed cases is 41. The laboratory results of two patients who are in critical condition at Bamrasnaradura Infectious Diseases Institute are negative. Both patients are waiting for their health conditions to recover.

The epidemiological data of Thailand and other countries revealed that the close contacts who are at risk for infection are family members and medical staff who do not wear standard personal protective equipment. Therefore, self-quarantine at home should be included in the disease surveillance measures and recommendations which are categorized into 3 levels as follows:

Group 1: This group will need to be isolated, quarantined, or controlled for observation (according to the Communicable Diseases Act, B.E. 2558 (2015) including 1) persons who meet the criteria for patient under investigation (PUI) showing symptoms and having risk exposure history. This group has to be under strict isolation

2) high risk contacts who are people showing no symptoms but have risk of infection from confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 including family members, classmates, colleagues, persons who share same vehicles, who have close contact with PUI (case definition by DDC, MOPH) patients. This group also includes healthcare providers who did not wear personal protective equipment while providing health care services. It is necessary for this group to strictly self-quarantine at home for 14 days and maintain social distancing, avoid mass gathering events, stop working, stop going to schools, and avoid sharing objects for personal use.

Group 2: People who do not have contact with the confirmed cases but are at risk for infection are the people returning from outbreak areas. Even if this group does not develop symptoms, it is recommended to comply with the following instructions to reduce transmission:

- Maintain social distancing. In other words, avoid joining social activities
- Implement self-monitoring for any clinical symptoms at home/residence for 14 days
- Avoid unnecessary visits to public or crowded places.
- If anyone has symptoms including fever, coughing and sore throat, please see a medical doctor immediately.

Group 3: People residing in the same communities with the confirmed case and the general public. Please follow the instructions from the Ministry of Public Health "Eat cooked food, use serving spoons, wash hands often, and wear a mask while visiting crowded places."

Please understand that among people traveling from affected areas, not everyone is a confirmed case. Among the patients who have been admitted to observe their symptoms, not every one of those people is a confirmed case of COVID-19 as well.

Please do not be disgusted, do not stigmatize, and do not make fun of the patients or those who traveled from affected areas.

We are asking for sympathy, and sending encouragement to patients to recover from the illness. Everyone who is a confirmed case and who is in the high-risk group has already been in the track for the surveillance, prevention, and control system. The risk of spreading the virus to other people and society is unlikely. However, experiences from previous cases should be considered as a case study to let the public realize that withholding information negatively affects the individual patients, the surrounding society, and the nation.

3. Recommendations to the Public

3.1 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 a nearby hospital or meet the public health officers immediately, and inform the healthcare workers of their travel history to reduce the risk of complications from pneumonia progressing to severe or fatal outcomes.

3.2 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 avoid close contact with animals, especially with sick or dead animals.

3.3 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.