

Thailand prepares to bring back Thai workers from South Korea.

The prime minister assigned relevant parties to prepare to bring back Thai workers from the Republic of Korea (South Korea). All of them must be quarantined, especially the Thai workers from the two high-risk cities. Thailand is coordinating the next steps with the government of South Korea for the Thai workers who complete self-quarantine for 14 days and are screened before entering the airplane.

On 4 March 2020, Mr. Anutin Charnvirakul, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health, Dr. Sukhum Karnchanapimai, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Health, and Dr. Suwannachai Wattanayingcharoenchai, Director General of Department of Disease Control joined a multi-sectoral meeting to discuss the urgent measures to support Thai workers in the high-risk areas. The chairman of the meeting, General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister joined with Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Directors from the involved ministries and institutes e.g. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Health, Bangkok Governor and Airports of Thailand.

Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said that the government is preparing to have the undocumented workers returned, for those who want to return home voluntarily. There must be safety measures for the public in place including surveillance and quarantine of the returning workers for 14 days before their flights home. The workers in South Korea must pass exit screening before boarding their flights to Thailand. If they have a fever, they have to be quarantined in South Korea. For those who are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, they need to be treated in South Korea until they are fully recovered. The Thai government is finding the best solution for this matter by modifying plans for surveillance and screening according to the ongoing situation. Furthermore, there are preparations for medical supplies in accordance with the policies of General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand. He emphasized that Thailand needs to help Thai people first, and ensured that they will not be abandoned.

Moreover, there must be public confidence that when the Thai workers return to Thailand, they are unable to spread the disease. The designation of quarantine areas will be decided in another meeting. In the case of an undocumented worker who wants to return to Thailand, they need to contact the South Korea immigration office, a process that takes 5-15 days. During that time, both countries will coordinate to check the exact number of Thai workers who will return to their homeland.

Dr. Suwannachai Wattanayingcharoenchai, the Director General of the Department of Disease Control stated about the measures to support the return of the Thai workers in South Korea (especially the undocumented ones) that the workers will be screened at the Korean airport before boarding. When they arrive at the Thai airport, the passengers need to pass entry screening and will be categorized into the 3 following groups:

1. A group who has a fever and develops the suspected symptoms will be brought in for diagnosis at a designated hospital.
2. A group who has a travel history to risky areas (Daegu and North Gyeongsang) but does not show a fever or suspected symptoms will be quarantined at the areas prepared by the Thai government (located near their hometown) for at least 14 days.
3. A group who departs from or lives in other cities (neither Daegu nor North Gyeongsang) will be quarantined for 14 days. The provincial governors, Provincial Health Officers and relevant sectors under the Provincial Communicable Diseases Committees were assigned to be responsible for this group. For the places/areas prepared for quarantining this group, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Public Health will consult each other to find appropriate places.