

Special Announcement of COVID-19 On 31 March 2020

1. The situation on 31 March 2020 at 8.00 a.m.

1. There are currently 1,299 confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) being actively treated in hospitals, 342 cases have recovered and have been sent home, and there have been 10 deaths, which brings the total number of COVID-19 cases detected in Thailand thus far to 1,651.

2. As of 7:00 a.m. on 31 March 2020, since 5 January 2020, the international situation has involved 197 countries, two special administrative regions of China, and cruise ships. There were 768,466 confirmed cases and 36,914 deaths. 81,518 of these confirmed cases and 3,305 of these deaths are from the People's Republic of China. 164,359 of these confirmed cases and 3,173 of these deaths are from the United States. 101,739 of these confirmed cases and 11,591 of these deaths are from the Italian Republic.

2. MOPH asked people to wear cloth masks; N95 masks are suitable for health care providers who take care of patients.

The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) revealed that 17,000 N95 masks are required every day by healthcare providers who work closely with patients and who perform or are involved with medical procedures. The MOPH asked for the cooperation of the general public to use cloth masks instead of N95 masks. People can make donations to support the hospitals in their communities. The Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital has been successful in sterilizing masks via radiation.

On 31 March 2020, at the Ministry of Public Health, Nonthaburi Province, Dr. Sukhum Karnchanapimai, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Public Health stated about COVID-19 that the increasing number of patients around the world has increased the demand of medicine and medical supplies, especially N95 masks and personal protective equipment (PPE). Thailand needs to import medicine and medical supplies because most of the big manufacturing plants are abroad and if the epidemic continues, it will be difficult to order and may take longer to buy them.

As of 28 March 2020, the Ministry of Public Health has distributed 183,910 N95 masks to hospitals and there are more than 200,000 masks still available in stock across hospitals under the Office of the Permanent Secretary and Government Pharmaceutical Organization. There is also an additional procurement plan of approximately 700,000 masks with an order from 3M Company in USA (200,000 masks), Siam Koken Company Limited (100,000 masks per month) and 400,000 masks will be imported from China to the Government Pharmaceutical Organization. According to the estimate, if there are 10,000 COVID-19 patients, 17,000 N95 masks will be needed per day for personnel who work closely with COVID-19 patients or have to perform medical procedures. Therefore, people are requested for cooperation to use fabric masks and those who wish to donate for supporting health care providers, can donate at the nearest hospital or to the Ministry of Public Health or contact the Tel. number at 0 2590 2078-9.

The personal protective equipment and medical supplies received from the Chinese Government, including 100,000 surgical masks, 10,000 N95 masks, and 2,000 other PPE supplies, were already distributed to Regional Health Offices across the country. Regarding the medical equipment received from Jack Ma and the Alibaba Foundation, comprising over 550,000 protective

masks and face shields and 50,000 protective suits, the Medical Logistics Distribution Center responsible for distribution already provided the aforementioned equipment to the Naruebodindra Medical Institute, Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital, Chulalongkorn Hospital, Thai Red Cross Society, Siriraj Hospital and hospitals located in three areas at the Southern border of Thailand.

Dr. Sukhum said that N95 masks and hygienic masks are necessary for the prevention of infections spread through the droplet or aerosol transmission. Typically those masks are not recommended for reuse. However, during the COVID-19 outbreak, there has been a shortage of masks; therefore, researchers were able to find an alternative method to reuse the N95 masks and hygienic masks. A study from the Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi in cooperation with the Thailand National Metal and Materials Technology Center, the National Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (BIOTEC), Assistive Technology, and Medical Devices Research Center (A-MED) and BRIA LAB have found that UV-C irradiation can eliminate the coronavirus.

The Department of Medical Services and many professors from the academic sector also with professional associations and medical schools updated the treatment guidelines for the confirmed COVID-19 cases on 29 March 2020 as follows: 1) Every confirmed case regardless of having symptoms or not, must be hospitalized during the first 2-7 days to observe symptoms or receive treatment. When they recover to a normal condition, they may be taken and observed in the hospital or designated places for a total of 14 days. 2) After recovery, and completely isolated for 14 days, they are able to return home and go to work. However, they must wear a mask, keep distance from others, and separate all food and personal belongings from others.