

Special Announcement of COVID-19 on 2 March 2020

1. The situation on 2 March 2020 at 8.00 a.m.

1. There are currently 11 confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) being treated in hospitals, 31 cases who returned to their homes and 1 death, which brings the total number of coronavirus infection cases detected in Thailand to 43.

2. From 3 January to 2 March 2020., the total number of patients under investigation (PUI) increased to 3,252 people. Of those, 95 PUIs were detected from screening at all ports of entry and 3,157 people sought medical services on their own at hospitals. 1,872 cases returned to their homes and some of them are continually being monitored. Most of the PUI were infected with seasonal influenza, and 1,380 PUI are still admitted at hospitals.

3. Regarding the international situation involving 64 countries and two administrative regions between 5 January to 2 March 2020 at 7.00 A.M., there were 88,282 confirmed cases and 3,000 deaths, with 79,828 cases and 2,870 deaths coming from the People's Republic of China.

2. MOPH expands the surveillance and investigation guidelines for more detection in the community; The MOPH reported that one confirmed case fully recovered and returned home while one new case was confirmed

The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) reported that one case recovered and was discharged from the hospital. Meanwhile, a female Thai tour guide, was confirmed with SARS-COV-2. The MOPH is expanding the surveillance and investigation guidelines to accelerate the detection of disease in communities that have clusters of more than 5 cases of Influenza-Like-Illness (ILI) in the same community.

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 confirmed case (a 43-year-old Thai woman who traveled to Japan), fully recovered, and was discharged from Rajavithi Hospital and can return home. One new confirmed case was reported in a 22-year-old female Thai tour guide who is a close contact with the 37th confirmed case (a Thai man who is a tour guide/driver). Currently, the total number of patients is 43, 11 cases are being treated in hospitals, 31 cases were discharged from the hospital and there has been one death.

To increase coverage of surveillance for infection screening in the community, the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand has updated the definition of patients under investigation (PUI) to include clusters of patients (more than 5 persons) with respiratory illnesses for patients found in the same area, in the same week. Expanding the definition of PUI will increase the sensitivity of community infection detection. For surveillance in hospitals, if patients with pneumonia who were treated and have not improved, have unknown cause of illness, are in critical condition, or are fatal cases with unknown causes, they will be tested for COVID-19 infection .

The National Committee on Communicable Diseases has set the academic committee (8 people) according to the Communicable Diseases Act, B.E. 2558 on 27 December 2019. The academic committee has the responsibility and power to give advice to 1) the Minister of Public Health in the announcement of disease infected zones; 2) to provide suggestions to the Director-General on the announcement of epidemics; 3) to provide suggestions to the Minister or the Director-General on cancellation of the announcement when the disease situation is under items (1) or (2), as the case may be, has been deemed calm or when there is a valid reason; and 4) to operate as assigned by the Committee.

In addition, MoPH organized a tele-conference with the provincial health medical doctors and directors of hospitals in the country with the main objective being to exercise the COVID-19 preparedness
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and response plan, review implementation in each area, guide every province to implement the appropriate operational procedures and increase the efficiency of staff/officers in the incident command system. The following implementations were recommended:

1. Strictly implement communicable disease control and surveillance measures in every port of entry in accordance with the Communicable Diseases Act, B.E. 2558
2. Comply with the guidelines for disease diagnosis, treatment and COVID-19 infection control in hospitals as determined by the Department of Medical Services and expert committees including coordinating and integrating with all health care providers both from the private and public sectors for the most effective treatment.
3. In collaboration with the Public Health Emergency Operations Center, MoPH, it is recommended to effectively administer and manage the necessary resources (18 programs) both at the provincial and district levels in order to ensure the safety of officers and personnel implementing the measures.
4. People departing from risky areas determined by the DDC and the organizers of mass gathering activities shall strictly comply with the DDC recommendations.
5. Focus on the measures of eating cooked food, using a serving spoon, washing hands, using a cloth mask, cleaning surfaces, keeping healthy, and checking various communication channels continuously and consistently by the participation of the health volunteers and the public sector.
6. Continually hold meetings and command the provincial and regional levels and up to utilize the operational mechanism of the Communicable Disease Committee at the provincial level. Preparedness measures are set in places where COVID-19 may spread widely. The aim is for all relevant organizations to understand and be prepared to respond to the situation, manage obstacles and create cooperative networks inside and outside the Ministry of Public Health.

In the case of the Private Hospital Association Thailand, a letter to Mr. Anutin Charnverakul, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health, addressed the struggle of the shortage of masks. The Ministry of Public Health has surveyed the demand for the use of masks in hospitals, both public and private, as a whole in the country since last week, in order to present this issue to the Ministry of Commerce to alleviate the problem. Today, the Ministry of Public Health has provided to the public, three masks per individual in accordance with the policy of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Health to use in disease prevention. The provided masks are different from those allocated under authorization to hospitals.

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.