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ASIA EDITION

Thailand recommends travel control measures for COVID-19

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The WHO Thailand Situation Report on COVID-19 highlights the preparedness and response on what Thailand is doing to fight COVID-19 and to protect its tourists



On Thursday, 30 January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). The WHO did not recommend any travel or trade restrictions based on its latest travel advice dated 11 February 2020.

The WHO has advised countries to be prepared for containment, including active surveillance, early detection, isolation and case management, contact tracing and prevention of the onward spread of the COVID-19 infection.

The WHO Thailand Situation Report on COVID-19 dated 17 February 2020, highlighted the preparedness and response on what Thailand is doing as per the following.

- Thailand has strong capacities for case detection, risk assessment, case investigation, laboratory diagnosis, clinical management, infection prevention and control, and risk communication.
- Thailand also recently updated its dedicated national pandemic influenza preparedness plan (currently pending approval by the Prime Minister's Cabinet).
- With WHO support, the National Institute of Health of Thailand is supporting specimen testing for other countries as requested; this support is currently being provided to Myanmar. Support for Indonesia is also being arranged. Support for the Maldives is also under discussion with AFRIMS, Thailand (Armed Force Research Institute of Medical Sciences).
- A special advisory group consisting of former high-level health officials has been formed to support the Ministry of Public Health in its response to the outbreak.
- The Ministry of Public Health is conducting modelling exercises with the National Research Council of Thailand to forecast possible scenarios and outcomes as the outbreak evolves in Thailand.
- Visitors to Thailand who have recently been in Wuhan, China, and other affected areas are being provided information upon arrival by the Ministry of Public Health, including how to report any possible illness to the Department of Disease Control using the 1422 hotline from anywhere in Thailand.

- The Ministry of Public Health has also introduced a self-reporting online tool, available in Thai, English and Chinese, at http://sescimande.net/Self-Screening.

With regards to the COVID-19 situation in Thailand, as of yesterday (18 February 2020), the Ministry of Public Health has confirmed a total of 35 confirmed cases, including 17 people who were treated and discharged from hospital. This reflects Thailand's effective implementation of disease surveillance to prevent further spread or importation of the COVID-19 in the country.

Before embarkation from original destinations

- Incoming passengers to Thailand, from affected areas as announced by the Ministry of Public Health, are subject to primary fever screening at check-in counters before being allowed to board the aircraft or cruise.
- Any travellers showing signs of the COVID-19 symptoms (coughing, sneezing, panting or a runny nose) are subject to further medical evaluation and treatment and will be advised to delay the travel.

Onboard the aircraft or cruise

- Staff are to wear surgical masks and gloves and to provide masks for passengers as well as observe passengers for COVID-19 symptoms.
- Staff are to implement extra and frequent sanitising of high-traffic areas onboard; such as restrooms.
- All passengers and staff are to practice hand hygiene (washing with soap or using alcohol-based gel)
- Any passengers showing signs of the COVD-19 symptoms are subject to be isolated while onboard and to be referred for further medical evaluation and treatment upon arrival.
- Passengers seated in close vicinity of the suspected cases are subject to be followed up for 14 days in accordance with the disease prevention and control standards.
- Before arrival, airlines and cruise operators are to submit the relevant documents and information to Thai authorities for evaluation of the health risk factors and further action.

Upon arrival at the point of entry

- Travellers are subject to primary fever screening by thermo scanners and infrared thermometers and a questionnaire on their travel history and contact information.
- Travellers with no fever will receive a health beware card and be allowed to enter the country.
- Travellers with a body temperature above 38 degrees Celsius and who have COVID-19 symptoms will be isolated and transferred to a designated hospital for quarantine or treatment.
- Travellers who have been in contact or seated in the close vicinity of the suspected cases will be followed up for 14 days in accordance with the disease prevention and control standards.

While in Thailand

On Business

- Event organisers are to advise participants to download an infographic on "Tips for Pleasant Business in Thailand".
- Participants are subject to primary fever screening by thermo scanners and infrared thermometers at the venue's entrance. Any participants showing signs of the COVID-19 symptoms are subject to further medical evaluation and treatment and will be advised to cancel their participation.
- Participants are to wear a badge or sticker showing that they have passed the primary screening.
- Event organisers are to provide a mask for participants, information on how to wear the mask and how to properly dispose of it.
- Event organisers are to provide hand cleansing alcohol gel at high-traffic locations; such as, registration counters, coffee break areas, and restrooms, as well as advise participants to practice hand hygiene (washing with soap or using alcohol gel).

On Tour

- Local and international tourists are subject to primary fever screening at attractions throughout the country.
- Practice "travel safely" by following the WHO's "Reduce Your Risk of COVID-19 Infection" recommendations: clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub; cover nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with tissue or flexed elbow; avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms; thoroughly cook meat and eggs; and avoid unprotected contact with live wild or farm animals.
- While travelling, wear a surgical mask, avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms, and avoid visiting crowded places.

- Local and international tourists can keep up to date with tourism information and the COVID-19 situation inThailand at www.tatnews.org.
- If any local or international tourists become sick while travelling, do seek medical care early, or contact the Department of Disease Control Hotline 1422
- For information and assistance relating to Thailand's tourism, contact the TAT Contact Centre 1672 or Tourist Police 1155.