

## Thai News Update: 19 March 2020

### **1. All inbound air passengers must have Covid-free certificates**

**Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))**

The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand now requires all air passengers, Thai and foreign, to show Covid-19-free health certificates and Covid-19 insurance before boarding their flights to Thailand. CAAT governor Chula Sukmanop announced the condition, and other requirements, on Wednesday as part of government efforts to contain novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19). He said arriving passengers who visited China, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Macao or South Korea in the past 14 days will be quarantined. When passengers check in, airlines must check whether they had visited Covid-19 epidemic areas in the previous 14 days.

### **2. Thailand claims to have cheaper and faster virus test kits**

**Source: The Thai PBS World ([Link](#))**

The CRISPR diagnostic kits are a joint development by the Wittayasirimethi Institute, the Faculty of Medicine of Siriraj Hospital and PTT Public Company. Assistant Professor Chayasith Uttamapinan, one of the researchers who worked on the development of the kits and a lecturer at the Faculty of Science and Molecular Biological Engineering, said that the test can produce results in 30-45 minutes, compared with the current 4-6 hours, and cost about US\$15 each, compared with 3,000-13,000 baht for the current ones.

### **3. Tourism minister to seek reprieve for overstayers**

**Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))**

The Tourism Ministry will seek a reprieve for some 500,000 tourists who will end up overstaying their visa now that countries in Europe have started sealing their borders to deal with Covid-19. "Most of the remaining tourists are long-stay elderly travellers from Germany, Italy and Russia who spend their winters here. They came to Thailand before the virus hit their hometowns and decided not to return home. They fear not receiving sufficient healthcare [upon returning home during such dire circumstances]," said Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn.

#### **4. CORONAVIRUS: Thai-Malaysia border sealed**

**Source: The Thaiger ([Link](#))**

The Thai-language daily Khao Sod reported on 18 March the Royal Thai Army has ordered a shutdown of 13 temporary Thai-Malay border checkpoints to prevent the spread of the Covid 19 coronavirus . The order took effect from 5am on 19 March. The measure was taken after the Malaysian government closed the nation's borders from March 18 to March 31, to contain the virus. Only Malaysian citizens can enter, and no foreigners may enter or leave the nation during the period.

#### **5. Thailand to import antiviral drugs from China**

**Source: The Thaiger ([Link](#))**

Thailand's gaffe-prone Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul announced on 18 March his ministry has negotiated a deal with China to supply antiviral drugs to Thailand. 120,000 tablets of Favipiravir, an antiviral drug, will be imported to battle the Covid-19 coronavirus. Anutin says the ministry negotiated the deal, under which drugs and medical supplies will be made for, and sold to, Thailand, with the Chinese embassy in Bangkok. The Chinese government approved the deal and is in the process of confirming the arrangements, according to Anutin.

#### **6. 40 labs certified for coronavirus testing announced**

**Source: Thai PBS World ([Link](#))**

40 laboratories were named on 18 March by the Department of Medical Science of Thailand's Ministry of Public Health as certified to conduct testing for the Covid-19 coronavirus. 15 of the labs are run by the department itself, including one under Thailand's National Institute of Health. The rest are part of its network of affiliated institutions. The lists are can be identified below...

#### **7. Thailand to supply 400 more beds to accommodate COVID-19 patients in Bangkok**

**Source: Xinhuanet ([Link](#))**

The Thai ministry of public health on 18 March reassured the public that there will be sufficient hospital beds to accommodate COVID-19 patients. "There is no reason to worry about shortage of hospital beds, we are supplying extra 400 beds in Bangkok by this week," said Dr. Somsak Akhasilp, director-general of the ministry's Department of Medical Services. The ministry on 18 March reported 35 new cases of the COVID-19, raising the number of local infections to 212.

"We have not reached the kind of level like in Italy yet where medical resources were overwhelmed by the scale of the outbreak," said Somsak.

#### **8. Operators call for two-week lockdown**

**Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))**

Tourism operators are urging the state to impose a two-week lockdown to keep the coronavirus from spreading to provincial areas and creating a deeper impact on the economy. It's not too late to put the country into a complete lockdown, closing both land and air connections for two weeks or up to one month, as an urgent measure to tackle the outbreak, said Chamnan Srisawat, president of the Thai Federation of Provincial Tourist Associations (TFOPTA). The federation plans to propose the lockdown at a meeting of all tourism-related associations on 18 March, seeking approval from other tourism businesses. Mr Chamnan said the government should impose a lockdown policy as soon as possible before the coronavirus spreads to every part of the country, particularly during Songkran.

#### **9. Rapid test kit ready for trials**

**Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))**

Thai researchers have developed a rapid test kit for Covid-19 and plan to launch clinical trials next month. According to the research team led by Vidyasirimedhi Institute of Science and Technology (VISTEC), the new kit will deliver results in 30 to 45 minutes, compared to the four to six hours currently required. Chayasith Uttamapinant, a lecturer at the Faculty of Biomolecular Science and Engineering at VISTEC, said more kits are being produced for the planned trials, adding that initial tests were conducted at the Microbiology Department under the Faculty of Medicine at Siriraj Hospital.

#### **10. Thailand gives tourists SIM cards to download health declaration app**

**Source: Vietnam Plus ([Link](#))**

Thailand's National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) will be providing SIM Cards to travellers from risk countries, allowing them to download the AOT Airports application into their mobile phones, in order to submit compulsory health declarations and enable tracking. The NBTC Secretary General Takorn Tantasith said on March 18 the commission had reached an agreement with the Department of Disease Control, and five mobile network operators to offer free SIM cards to travellers from the Republic of Korea, China, Italy,

Iran, Macau, and Hong Kong, in order to enable an electronic health declaration and location tracking as part of the effort to minimize COVID-19 transmission.