

1. What is your understanding about the emergence, spread across countries and scientific understanding of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19?

Ans

As COVID-19 emerged and spread, world powers strengthened their resolve to contain the outbreak. In January 2019, the Thailand Department of Disease Control (DDC), the ASEAN Health Cluster and the WHO took measures to coordinate efforts to stop the outbreak and prevent its further spread. International coordination activities can play a major role in the response to disease outbreak and include collecting and sharing information with international and regional organizations, providing documents prepared for public dissemination, and issuing press release documents produced via the coordination mechanisms. Within the larger response, there were two primary units operating to fulfill the departmental assignments: the Office of International Cooperation (OIC) and the Division of Epidemiology (DOE) served as the units for supporting international cooperation in disease prevention and control, coordinating with relevant national and international agencies, and was responsible for serving as the position of liaison officer of international response at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) of the Department of Disease Control (DDC).

2. When (date) and how (e.g. official correspondence, phone call, social media) did you learn about key information, alerts or recommendations from global or regional bodies?

Ans

At a beginning of January, 2020, Regional Director of WHO South East Asia, sent a letter about Novel Corona virus outbreak to inform the Thailand Minister of Public Health. The Minister provided a statement to express the sincere appreciation to WHO for providing the technical package and beneficial information related to the novel coronavirus. The Thailand MOPH acknowledged the WHO technical package guidance and refer to it in the next investigation guidelines. In alignment with official national protocol, international points of entry continue fever screening of travelers arriving from Wuhan in order to closely monitor any possible infectious disease. With information provided by national and international agencies, all executive levels of the Thailand MOPH acknowledged the situation of an outbreak of pneumonia caused by novel coronavirus 2019 in Wuhan, China. In terms of international cooperation, ASEAN platform has disseminated the information including control measures among ASEAN member states.

3. What actions were taken by your country, and when, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19?

Ans

Thailand has initially started responded the COVID-19 at the first week of January. Here are summaries of action taken by Thailand to mitigate the COVID-19 outbreak

- 1) Investing in health facilities is a key success. As stated earlier, Thailand has invested in basic healthcare infrastructure for the last four decades. There are more than 1,000 public hospitals providing secondary and tertiary care services and more than 10,000 primary health care facilities or “health promoting hospitals” providing primary healthcare services to their beneficiaries across the country. During the COVID-19 outbreak, these healthcare facilities have been repurposed to accommodate COVID-19 patients while maintaining the other essential services.
- 2) Universal health coverage (UHC). Thailand has achieved universal health coverage since 2002. All Thai people can access healthcare services under the UHC schemes. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Thai government has provided essential healthcare to all infected people, including foreigners. All COVID-19 patients have accessed essential treatment without financial barriers.
- 3) Contributions of more than one million village health volunteers. These volunteers have worked in complement with primary healthcare services at the community level. They have conducted door-to-door visits for health education, active case finding, disease surveillance, quarantine, and even made cloth masks for the people. They have left no stone unturned in the quest to control COVID-19.
- 4) Taking early action. Three days after China announced the abnormal cases of pneumonia, Thailand started to screen passengers from Wuhan and within five days found the first case outside of China. This prompted strong public health measures and campaigns for hand hygiene, social distancing and the universal use of facial masks, which helped to hammer down the first wave. A whole-of-government approach led by top political leaders is also important. Right before the peak of the first wave, Thailand established the CCSA, chaired by the Prime Minister. The CCSA has met regularly to make important, timely, evidence-based decisions.
- 5) Nationwide public cooperation on effective social measures. A daily press conference by the CCSA’s spokesperson and risk communication by the MOPH executives and experts provide essential information to the public and repeatedly motivates healthy behaviours. Thailand monitors the people’s COVID-19 related behaviours every week and makes decision accordingly.