



Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce in Thailand

5 March 2020

Control v 1.4 CLEAN

**His Excellency Mr. Anutin Charnvirakul
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health
Ministry of Public Health
Mueang Nonthaburi District,
Nonthaburi 11000**

Your Excellency:

Virus Containment – our recommendations

The Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce in Thailand (www.jfctt.org) has been serving the foreign business community for over 40 years, through good times and tough times. Our mission is to strengthen the attractiveness of Thailand as an investment and tourism destination and to support Thailand in being a good place to do business, amongst other aims.

Please see our recent suggestion (letter dated 23 January, attached) about reducing risk of transmission from surfaces at Immigration checkpoints, which was also provided to you. We have also written to the Director-General, Department of Disease Control on 3rd February to offer our support, experience and perspectives.

It is most encouraging to see actions taken by the Ministry of Public Health in providing information, advice and responses via a portal – in more than one language <https://ddc.moph.go.th/viralpneumonia/eng/index.php>. It is also encouraging to know about concrete actions on the domestic front to curtail mass activities which could bring a risk of transmission.

The Covid19 virus has had an obvious impact on tourist arrivals, on tourism receipts, on business generally, on the MICE sector, on public health and on perceptions about safe conduct.

Here we offer some ***balanced suggestions***. There is no simple answer to these issues.

At the time of writing there continues to be some confusion about the intended policy of mandatory quarantining from 'high risk' economies.



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A policy of mass quarantining will mean the end of much of the remaining tourism and MICE industry, and will have a direct negative impact on doing business in Thailand. Thus we suggest that all avenues need to be explored. It will also have a great impact on students returning to Thailand, and on continuation of studies with various complex issues, as has been demonstrated in Australia for example.

We are concerned that such a policy may be overkill in some respects, but still not address important issues. If thousands are effectively prevented from entering Thailand, and screening continues to be less than effective, the basis of the problem is shifted without being fully addressed. Such a policy would also bring an end to much of the remaining tourism and MICE activity. Quarantining also has the risk that the quarantine location will be one which allows becoming infected.

Uncertainty about how this policy may be applied is itself a negative aspect. International press (eg CNN) has picked up policy changes and the element of uncertainty.

We offer this package of recommendations about **containment**

1. **Effective screening** for all in-bound passengers: our members tell us that in-bound screening at Suvarnabhumi is often not effective in that many passengers from identified originations are not screened properly due to wrong placement of heat detection cameras, staffing issues etc. There is first hand evidence about this. Any person detected should then go through a second process (conducted in isolation) to determine the nature of the temperature.
2. Domestic containment through **screening at all buildings** where medium to large numbers of people enter, with tracing information.
3. Ensure **supplies** of gels, disinfectants, and for health workers, the right masks etc. Panic buying and hoarding is not helpful.
4. **Avoid** arranging large scale events of over 50 as the risk of non containment increases
5. Domestic containment can be stepped up through personal practices. These are **personal and business practices**. The WHO has useful advice:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

which includes frequent hand washing, avoiding human contact, seeking medical



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help if ill, not sharing utensils etc. Such measures should not be downplayed as effective containment means.

7. When it comes to **quarantining** of in-bound travellers, quarantine may be necessary for identified very high risk locations and groups, identified based on published guidelines and rules. Quarantine environments would need to be managed and monitored with those under quarantine receiving proper care and need to be safe environments so that they too do not become infection beds. As to currently identified high risk areas, concerns about China, S. Korea, Italy and Iran are noted. Most are reported to be taking measures for domestic containment. We wonder if Hong Kong is a 'high risk' location however.
6. A more detailed analysis shows that in some economies, there are few active cases regardless of the number of total cases: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>. The number of active cases might provide an idea about how that other economy has managed initial cases and has contained the spread. An example is Singapore at 33.

Country, Other	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Active Cases	Total Recovered	Serious, Critical
China	80,430	+160	3,013	+32	25,209	52,208	5,952
S. Korea	5,766	+145	35		5,643	88	52
Italy	3,089		107		2,706	276	295
Iran	2,922		92		2,278	552	
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	706		6		488	212	35
Japan	331		6		282	43	29
France	285		4		269	12	15
Germany	262				246	16	2
Spain	228		2		224	2	7
USA	160	+2	11		140	9	8
Singapore	112				33	79	7
Hong Kong	105	+2	2		66	37	6

In **summary**, we recommend and encourage the use of guiding principles



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1. **Certainty** about any policy so that planning is possible.
2. **Balanced response** with meaningful objectives, clearly stated purpose
3. **Avoiding draconian measures** including non-credible and out-of-balance penalties or measures, which may seem knee-jerk reactions which may not be most effective in dealing with the problems, but nevertheless cause economic harm anyway.
4. Continued **public education** about personal conduct (such as in the WHO advice), avoiding holding large meetings etc.
5. Effective **medical support** for anyone needing to take themselves out of public exposure.
6. Effective **business support** in the details of regulations which currently prevent workarounds. For example for business continuity, meetings and seminars must go ahead, but they can be done by electronic means and webinars. Restrictions on holding meetings by electronic means should be lifted immediately; JFCCT will be pleased to provide details.

In addition to work on business continuity measures (eg. supporting holding meetings by electronic means) JFCCT is also working on support for business cases impacted by the virus such as support for dealing with force majeure cases and other support.

JFCCT and its members greatly value any measures which can be taken in recognition of the need for business continuity and other support.

We will be pleased to provide any further details.

Yours sincerely

Stanley Kang
Chairman JFCCT

cc His Excellency Dr. Somkid Jatusripitak
Deputy Prime Minister