

# REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

May 25 - 31, 2023

## WEEKLY EVENTS

- On May 23, 2023, The Laotian Times reported that several residential roofing sheet factories in Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Champasak, Lao PDR were not up to management standards for asbestos containment. This poses a risk to residents living within a 2-kilometer radius of these factories, of asbestos exposure. The Australian People for Health, Education, and Development Abroad (APHEDA), a non-governmental organization have taken action by advocating and submitting proposals to urge the factories to improve their production processes to meet the standards and reduce the future health risks for the local population.
- On May 29-30, 2023, the Office of International Cooperation, Department of Disease Control organized an operational meeting and developed an operational plan to detect and respond to public health emergencies. The meeting was attended by over 60 participants from agencies in border areas and at the national level, under the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Interior, non-governmental organizations, and others. The objective was to strengthen the network for disease prevention and control among international migrant workers in the border areas, providing them with knowledge, understanding, and analytical skills to develop strategic plans and actions to prevent and address public health issues.

## MALARIA A CONTINUING DISEASE IN THAILAND

Data from the Disease Surveillance Report, Department of Disease Control, Week 21 (May 22-28, 2023), reported a fatal case of malaria. The deceased case was a man of Myanmar nationality who became ill while residing along the Myanmar border, adjacent to Umphang District, Tak Province. Laboratory tests confirmed *P. falciparum* infection.

The Shoklo Malaria Research Unit (SMRU) in Tak Province shared information on the malaria situation in Myanmar, particularly in Karen State, which shares a border with Thailand's Mae Sot District, Tak Province. In 2019-2020, the number of malaria cases decreased significantly, with only 8,000 cases reported. However, in 2022, the number of cases increased to 32,000. In January 2023, there were 4,150 cases, indicating a severe resurgence. This could be attributed to political fluctuations, limited healthcare services, and limited access to treatment. Many Myanmar nationals had to migrate and reside in mountainous areas, which are prone to disease outbreaks.

The malaria situation in Thailand in 2023 was characterized by the data that 90% of cases were reported from border provinces, namely Tak, Mae Hong Son, Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi, Phetchaburi, and Prachuap Khiri Khan. The highest number of patients were reported in Tak Province. Based on this situation, the Department of Disease Control established a National Communicable Disease Committee to develop an accelerated plan to eliminate malaria, with a focus on the aforementioned six provinces. The plan focuses on supporting local administrative organizations and allocating resources to effectively combat malaria. Additionally, it emphasizes rapid case detection and the use of a volunteer workforce to closely monitor and provide care for patients. Furthermore, Thailand is trying to reduce the number of cases along the border, especially on the neighboring country's side, through the utilization of border health mechanisms. These measures aim to achieve the goal of making Thailand malaria-free by 2024.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Public health officials should notify the local provincial administrations to raise awareness among residents about the causes, initial symptoms, and proper prevention methods of malaria. This is especially important for individuals residing in forested areas and migrant workers who reside in Thailand or who frequently travel along border areas. Relevant agencies should prioritize conducting intensive screenings for malaria among these priority groups. If a positive case is detected, prompt and continuous treatment should be provided, followed by monitoring and evaluation of the treatment's effectiveness until complete recovery. Only then should individuals be allowed to travel outside the area to prevent transmission to other regions.

## INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY



Multisectoral Capacity Development Program for Public Health Emergency Detection and Response in Border Areas

Office of International Cooperation, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand  
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### CONTACT

oic-ddc@gmail.com

02-5903832

www.ddc.go.th/oic

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