INNOVATION

Mr Buddhipongse visits Suvarnabhumi airport for the launch of an AoT app for travellers entering the country. PORNPROM SATRABHAYA

Ministry unveils new quarantine app

KOMSAN TORTERMVASANA

The Digital Economy and Society (DES) Ministry has rolled out a new mobile app to track and monitor people coming from countries heavily hit by the coronavirus that are required to self-quarantine.

The "SydeKick for ThaiFight-COVID" app was developed by digital startup Articulus.

People arriving from China, Iran, Italy and South Korea are mandated to give their locations during 14-day self-quarantines.

The move came as the government scrapped its quarantine facilities and allowed people travelling from high-risk countries to quarantine at home.

DES Minister Buddhipongse Punnakanta said user data on the app will be kept confidential, which should boost public confidence about measures countering the outbreak.

Anyone required to self-quarantine must download the app to identify themselves before leaving their quarantine centre, he said.

The system will help government staff monitor daily behaviour of at-risk groups, determining whether they detain themselves at home in line with the specified period.

The goal is a joint effort with provincial public health officials, who will be in charge of close monitoring.

Violators of the self-quarantine rule will be prosecuted according to the law.

Mr Buddhipongse visited Suvarnabhumi airport yesterday to observe the first day of use for an app that inbound foreign travellers and Thais travelling from at-risk countries are required to use, filling in contact information. The app was developed by Airports of Thailand.

The information comprises phone numbers, passport numbers, name and address.

Arrivals are required to fill in such information before passing through immigration. The information will be deleted from the system after 14 days.

Passengers who are customers of mobile service providers and foreign tourists with roaming can download the application from the QR code located at the Covid-19 screening points.

As for international tourists with no SIM card, one can be bought from a mobile service provider at screening points for 49 baht and can be used for 14 days.

If infection is discovered after entry to the country, the system will notify the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission and mobile service providers before quickly tracking the coordinates of infected individuals as well as fellow travellers, said Mr Buddhipongse.

He said both apps are meant to collect data and track travellers entering Thailand, aiming at building confidence and reducing panic among citizens in response to the epidemic.