

TELECOM

Arrivals to get free SIM cards with internet

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Mobile phone SIM cards with unlimited internet service will be distributed to inbound travellers for free before they pass through immigration counters as part of a move to help track arrivals amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Takorn Tantasith, secretary-general of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), said the free SIM cards, which can be used for 14 days, will be handed by major mobile operators.

Those who already have SIM cards will be given a 49-baht top-up for free.

Since last Thursday, inbound travellers have been required to download a mobile app developed by Airports of Thailand (AoT) in a move to track travellers who come from risky countries and those considered to require self-quarantine for 14 days upon arrival.

Mr Takorn said the cost of the free SIM cards

shouldered by mobile operators can be deducted from the Universal Service Obligation fee they are usually obliged to pay to the NBTC annually.

He said there are two categories for monitoring inbound passengers.

First, inbound travellers, both foreigners and Thais, who travelled from six risky countries and territories — China, Iran, South Korea, Italy, Hong Kong and Macau — are mandated to download the AoT app.

This falls in line with the public health ministry's announcement in regards to dangerously contagious areas outside Thailand, caused by Covid-19, Mr Takorn said.

Second, inbound passengers who come from other countries will be asked to download the app, which complies with Section 12(7) of the immigration law. Those who refuse to download the app risk being barred from entering Thailand.

He said the app has been downloaded by more than 7,000 arrivals, as of yesterday.

Mr Takorn said user data put on the app will be kept confidential and deleted from the system in 14 days.

The Department of Disease Control is locating the whereabouts of 1,300 Thai illegal migrant workers who returned from South Korea since March 7 so they will be urged to install the app, he said.

He said once the arrivals are found to have been detected, the NBTC will ask mobile operators to provide their call data records, which include locations and time, of these groups for checking.