

Border hospitals seek financial aid from government

BANGKOK, Jan 31 (TNA) -- Budget constraints now faced by state hospitals operating near the Thai-Myanmar border have forced their management to seek financial assistance from Public Health Minister Jurin Laksanawisit during a meeting scheduled to be held on Monday.

Dr Worawit Tantiwattanasap, director of Umphang Hospital in Tak, said Sunday that hospitals operating along the Thai-Myanmar border now face severe debt incurred by providing free medical services, both to Thai nationals who do not have identification cards and to persons having no nationality.

He said hospitals operating in five districts of Tak now have debts as high as Bt111.5 million, as half of their patients have no identification cards and about 33 per cent of hospital bed occupancy is patients having no registered nationality.

Most patients without national identification papers still receive free medical services, and the hospitals also must pay other expenses such as meals and transportation fees for them, he said.

Hospitals must treat patients carrying deadly diseases, said Dr Worawit, adding that these diseases could spread to cities if no preventive measures are implemented.

Dr Worawit said hospitals can no longer shoulder the expenses and need government help. Border hospital directors will meet Mr Jurin on Monday and ask for the ministry's assistance.

Meanwhile, Dr Amphon Jindawatthana, secretary-general of the National Health Commission Office of Thailand, said it is estimated that about 500,000 people without ID cards now live in the country. He urged Mr Jurin to provide help to these poor people as it could also help prevent diseases from spreading in Thailand. (TNA)

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