

## Daily Thai News Updates: 3 April 2017

### 1. Chiang Mai is new ‘culture hub’ hotspot for travelers

Source: The Nation ([Link](#))

Thailand’s Chiang Mai tourism market has undergone a millennial transformation that is now tapping into a new base of travelers seeking authentic Thai experiences. Last year, more than 4.6 million people arrived at the city’s international gateway, thrusting the destination into a new light, as passenger volume only trailed Phuket in terms of provincial airports in the country. According to C9 Hotelworks’ latest market research Chiang Mai Hotel Market Overview, much of the growth has been fueled by rising low-cost carriers, with 5,346 flights from Greater China last year. Over the past 10 years, passenger arrivals have shot up three-fold with 2013 being the turning point fueled by the epic success of the Chinese film “Lost in Thailand”. Noting the explosive impact of cinematic wanderlust on tourism, C9’s managing director Bill Barnett said: “Be it ‘Eat Pray Love’ or ‘Notting Hill’, the impact of film in destination marketing is remarkable.

### 2. Bangladesh calls for trade talks

Source: The Nation ([Link](#))

Bangladesh has called on the Thai government to schedule the next meeting of the two countries’ Joint Trade Committee for June, as there remain a wide range of trade issues to discuss, notably high Thai import duties on Bangladeshi products. The JTC was created in the 1990s to enhance bilateral trade. Its last meeting was in Bangkok in 2013, and there many issues that need to be followed up, said Saida Muna Tasneem, the Bangladeshi ambassador. The JTC, which is co-chaired by the commerce ministers of the two countries, was supposed to meet in Dhaka last year, but the meeting was rescheduled many times because of various situations in Thailand, she said. Thai Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn said she could possibly visit Bangladesh in early June for the meeting. Tasneem said in an interview: “We are looking forward to that meeting in Bangladesh and would [ask] Thailand to reduce import duties for some particular items.”

### **3. Consumer prices rise 0.76% in March**

**Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))**

Annual headline consumer prices rose less than expected in March, government data showed on Monday, giving the central bank leeway to keep interest rates low to assist economic recovery. The headline CPI index rose for a 12th straight month in March, up 0.76% from a year earlier, its slowest pace in four months, compared with the 1.30% increase forecast in a Reuters poll. In February, the index rose 1.44% year-on-year. The Commerce Ministry predicted headline inflation in the second quarter will be about 1%, annually. The Bank of Thailand has forecast headline inflation of 1.2% this year, within its target range of 1-4%.

### **4. Alibaba EEC drive to start in 2017**

**Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))**

Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group expects to start investing in its production and logistics hub in Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) this year, says Industry Minister Uttama Savanayana. The project, named "Fifth generation e-commerce park", would be more than just a logistics hub to support Alibaba's e-commerce business in the region. It would also house production plants for Thai and foreign small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), said Mr Uttama. "Alibaba's fifth generation e-commerce park is a new business model for this region. It will include a production plant, logistics centre and a training centre for Thai and foreign SMEs," he said after a meeting with executives of Lazada Group, an Alibaba subsidiary. Alibaba's investment in the EEC is part of the Thai government's attempt to attract foreign investors to expand their business in the targeted EEC sectors.

### **5. 5G licence auction faces delay due to technicalities**

**Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))**

The planned fifth generation (5G) licence auction on the 2600-megahertz spectrum is likely to be put off to 2018 due to a lack of well-designed frequency valuation principles and the transition to a new telecom regulatory body. The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) initially planned to auction 80MHz of bandwidth on the 2600MHz spectrum in September this year. The spectrum is currently licensed to MCOT Plc. Prawit

Leesathapornwongsa, an NBTC commissioner, said the postponement would inevitably cause a delay in the country's 5G wireless network developments as 2600MHz is the most compatible band for 5G technology. He said the NBTC has not yet started to develop a valuation process for the 2600MHz spectrum. MCOT now holds a total of 190MHz of bandwidth on the 2600MHz spectrum, which it has not used over the past decade.