Thai News Update: 11 April 2018

1. Axing Of Energy Licences Rubbished
Source: The Nation (Link)

The Waste to Energy Trade Association (WETA), a body under the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI), has denounced policymakers for curbing the development of waste-to-energy projects, saying alternative energy sources are the key to reaching the government's goals of low emissions and energy independence. The association issued a statement on April 11 after the government announced it would no longer provide licences to develop and operate renewable power over the next five years, in a bid to hold down power bill costs. Policymakers said they would only support projects that sell power to state utilities at a lower rate than for traditional fossil sources such as coal and natural gas. Waste-to-energy projects have been supported nationwide by the military-led government since 2015 but still face "very large obstacles", according to WETA chairman Montri Wiboonrat. He said the push from the waste-to-energy sector is aimed at dealing with massive amounts of waste in big cities across Thailand. "It looked good in the first year of the policy's implementation, but it has remained the same situation with many tonnes of rubbish," Mr Montri said.

2. Thai Energy Firms Roll Out ASEAN Expansions
Source: Bangkok Post (Link)

Thai energy companies are on a roll. The national oil and gas champion, a coal miner and power utility, upstart solar and wind companies, virtually all are expanding across Southeast Asia, applying practices and technology developed at home. Thailand is reaping the benefits of two decades of government energy policies that have supported the sector. Companies are also profiting from oil and gas prices that are recovering from a three-year slump, increasing electricity demand due to economic growth, and renewable technologies that have become competitive against fossil fuels. Also, while the military junta that has ruled Thailand since mid-2014 has put no stamp of its own on the energy sector, it has targeted infrastructure spending to boost the economy and prioritised investment in high-tech industries. Long-standing reform policies have turned the state energy company PTT into a successful international oil and gas producer, encouraged the development of power producers such as Electricity Generating, and fostered the emergence of renewable startups like Energy Absolute.

3. Investors Tapped For Telecoms Upgrade
Source: The Nation (Link)

The Digital Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (DIF) will raise its registered capital to Bt53.237 billion through a public offering of 3.831 billion units as a means of financing its third round of investment in telecommunications infrastructure in the face of rising Internet usage. Smith Banomyong, chief executive officer of Siam Commercial Bank Asset Management and the DIF's manager, said that the planned investment would help develop the country's telecommunications infrastructure to cope with the increased demand for data services – driven by smartphones – after a shift to the 4G LTE network, ahead of a transition to 5G services. The move fits with the country's technological shift under the government's Thailand 4.0 policy and forms part of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society's digital economic system development. This plan will see the broadband network developed so that it can reach a target of extending access to at least 95 per cent of the population by 2021. Currently, just 27 per cent of the population have access to the broadband network.

4. 'Alternative' Property Sectors Draw Interest
Source: Bangkok Post (Link)

Investors are increasingly turning to alternative real estate sectors to take advantage of their attractive yields and long-term growth prospects in Asia-Pacific, according to property consultancy firm JLL. While major traditional real estate assets include housing estates, condominiums, office buildings, retail centres, industrial/logistics properties and hotels, alternative sectors include non-traditional real estate assets such as aged care or nursing homes, student housing, education, data centres and laboratories, according to JLL's new report The Rise of Alternative Real Estate in Asia Pacific. JLL also expects the outlook for alternatives in Asia-Pacific to be positive and continue to gain momentum due to broad demographic shifts such as urbanisation, an ageing population, as well as the region's rising household wealth and increasing use of technology.