

Thai News Update: 14 May 2019

1. Thailand's Richest Man, 12 Others To Build US\$6.8 Billion High-Speed Rail

Source: Channel News Asia ([Link](#))

Thai conglomerate Charoen Pokphand Group (CP) and 12 other companies were selected to build a US\$6.8 billion high-speed train project that will link three major airports in the country, the government said on May 13. The committee, chaired by Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, chose a joint investor for the public-private partnership that required the lowest amount of investment from the government, the Eastern Economic Corridor Policy (EEC) office said in a statement. The government's decision came in following months of negotiations after CP and 12 other companies jointly submitted a bid for the US\$6.8 billion project last year.

2. Bank of Thailand Denies Baht Trickery

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

The Bank of Thailand insists it has not manipulated the baht to gain an advantage in exports amid speculation Thailand could be added to the US's expanded watch list for currency manipulation. The central bank regularly communicates with the US Treasury, telling it Thailand has not stepped into the foreign currency market to gain a trade advantage. Yet the country may still be included on the watch list simply because it has a trade surplus with the US, said Chantavarn Sucharitakul, assistant governor for corporate strategy and relations at the Bank of Thailand.

3. Phuket's Rawai Fastest-Growing Airbnb Area In Thailand

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

According to new data released from an Airbnb survey carried out last year, the number of Airbnb guest arrivals visiting off-the-beaten path destinations in Thailand grew by 53% year-on-year and some areas with the fastest growth included: Rawai - 92% Chiang Rai -90%; Hat Yai –

214%; Saladan – 71%. Airbnb’s Head of Public Policy Southeast Asia Mich Goh said the data reinforced how Airbnb was helping grow tourism right across Thailand.

4. Thailand Eyeing More Halal Food Exports To Non-Muslim Countries

Source: Salaam Gateway ([Link](#))

Thailand wants to improve its branding to accelerate its halal exports to non-Muslim-majority countries as its reach to Islamic markets continues to grow steadily. Minister Counsellor of the Office of Commercial Affairs of the Royal Thai Embassy in Malaysia, Patcha Wutipan said the country's halal businesses are struggling to stand out in non-Muslim markets. Thailand wants to leverage its growing food trade to non-Muslim countries and Wutipan believes its halal products could do a lot better in those markets if they were better known.

5. CEA Collaborates With Indonesia On Promoting Creative Industries

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

The Creative Economy Agency, a (Public Organisation) is collaborating with the Indonesian Creative Economy Agency to promote Thai-Indonesian creative industries under the “Thai-Indonesia Creative Industry Collaboration.” The collaboration will feature a conference to exchange knowledge of the “creative economy” and promotional measures for Indonesian and Thai business collaboration. The objectives are to help creative businesses and industries in Asean to be competitive in the global market. In addition, CEA is prepared to discuss lessons learned and the restructuring of national economic development in order to promote Thailand as an “incubator for creative industries” on the global scale.

6. Visa Fee Exemption Boosts Indian Arrivals

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

Thailand's waiver of visa-on-arrival fees is likely to get less attention from Chinese travellers as arrivals from the mainland are still declining. Instead, the 2,000-baht fee exemption that runs from Nov 15, 2018 to Oct 31 this year has given a big boost to India, one of the 21 nations eligible for the exemption. Arrivals from China in the first quarter this year dropped slightly by 2.1% year-on-year to 3.1 million visitors, compared with a 25% growth in Indian arrivals to 450,000. For Chinese visitors who came and used the services of members of the Association of

Thai Travel Agents (Atta), there was a big drop of 13.6% to 1.05 million visitors during Jan 1 to April 20. Atta reports an 11% increase of 76,300 visitors from India during the same period.