

Thai News Update: 16 March 2020

1. Govt endeavours to clear up visa entry confusion

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

The Foreign Ministry on 14 March reiterated that the cancellation of visa on arrival (VOA) for 18 countries and visa exemption for three highly-infected countries came into effect on 13 March. The cancellations are in place temporarily until Sept 30, said Cherdkiat Atthakor, director-general and spokesman of the Foreign Ministry's Information Department. However, citizens of Russia, South Korea, Hong Kong and Macau that have signed bilateral agreements on free visas with Thailand are exempted from these two new visa policies, which means they can enter Thailand without having to apply for a visa.

2. Govt steps up virus fight

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

The government has stepped up measures to contain the coronavirus or Covid-19 if the country reaches Stage 3, a full-blown pandemic, with the first measure to use a newly built hospital to treat only Covid-19 patients, as the number of infections jumped alarmingly to 114 on 15 March. The premier mentioned the prospect of moving to Stage 3 after chairing an urgent meeting on 15 March to step up measures to stop the spread of the new coronavirus. The government will "spend all the resources we need" in the fight against Covid-19, he said. In case Thailand enters Stage 3, in which people including those with no previous trips to virus-hit countries catch the disease, a dedicated hospital is needed, Gen Prayut said, referring to a new 100-bed hospital which has yet to officially open.

3. Big changes in store after landmark deal

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

From every-corner convenience stores and agricultural seeds to invisible wireless networks and a planned high-speed train, the business empire of Charoen Pokphand (CP) Group seems to extend beyond the sky's limit, with no holds barred for its amplifying size. With the conglomerate triumphing over other bidders for control of UK-based Tesco's Asia business in a deal worth

US\$10.6 billion, CP Group's grip on controlling major stakes in Thailand's business landscape seems firmer, ushering in an awe-inspiring and terrifying sense at the same time. Included in the deal are 200 Tesco Lotus hypermarkets and 1,600 Tesco Lotus Express convenience stores in Thailand and 74 outlets in Malaysia, Reuters reported.

4. Walt Disney dreams for EEC

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

The Treasury Department plans to approach Walt Disney Co about building a theme park in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) area, says director-general Yuttana Yimgarund. The decision comes after Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak floated the idea of letting the department rent state land in the EEC to the private sector to build a Disney theme park similar to those in Hong Kong and Japan to support tourism in the eastern region. According to a Treasury Department survey, there are 5,400 rai of unused plots located along the high-speed train project. Of the 5,400 rai, 4,000 rai is located in Chachoengsao, with 700 rai each in Rayong and Chon Buri provinces.

5. Govt plans more stimulus packages to prop up economy

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

More stimulus packages are in the pipeline to counter the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak, a senior official said, while an economist has urged the government to expand the fiscal deficit to up to Bt 600 billion. Kobsak Pootrakool, secretary to the Council of Economic Ministers, said that economic ministers would consider extra packages as relief for certain sectors hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic after the government had recently implemented a stimulus package. He said that the spread of the coronavirus is expected to end by the end of June and after that it would be a recovery phase for the economy. The government had implemented 14 measures on March 6 to counter the virus impact, but they may not be adequate, according to Korbsak who is also deputy secretary-general to the Prime Minister for Political Affairs.

6. KPMG in Thailand brings in experts to strengthen Customs, supply chain service

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

KPMG in Thailand is continuing its expansion by hiring a team of professionals from a Bangkok-based consulting firm, Bolliger & Company Consulting Limited. The addition, to be effective as of March 16, will significantly strengthen KPMG's current Customs and supply

chain services capabilities, the company said. “KPMG in Thailand’s move on the country’s Customs scene is aimed at further enhancing how it can help businesses with the ever-increasing complexity of Customs requirements and international trade regulations while meeting the highest standards of compliance. I am delighted to welcome our new partner, Malika Bhumivarn, and her team

7. CentralWorld poised for major makeover as Isetan lease ends this year

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

CentralWorld has unveiled its plan to develop a new ‘Urban Lifestyle’ destination after the Isetan lease expires at the end of year. The mall operator plans to join hands with international partners to create a new experience and continue to increase revenue Central Pattana Plc (CPN), the operator of CentralWorld, said it has made progress in developing what it calls the ultimate ‘Urban Lifestyle’ destination. It will cover six floors and have a total space of 27,000 square metres. CPN said it wants to elevate a shopping experience in Ratchaprasong to a whole new level in order to meet the changing lifestyles of Thai shoppers and tourists from around the world. The renovation is expected to be completed and the new ‘Urban Lifestyle’ destination will be launched in 2021.