

## THAI NEWS UPDATE: 17 MAY 2021

### **1. Thai agencies close in on RCEP approval**

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

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade pact, the world's biggest free trade deal, is making good progress with Singapore and China already submitting their ratifications. According to Auramon Supthaweethum, director-general of the Trade Negotiations Department, other members are accelerating their internal processes, while three Thai state agencies are revving up issuance of related regulations for submission to the Asean Secretariat by October. The agreement was signed by 15 nations in Asia-Pacific including Thailand last November. It requires ratification from at least nine countries (at least six from Asean and three non-Asean countries) to take effect.

### **2. Impact opens doors to virus patients**

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

A new field hospital called "Busarakam" opened on 14 May at Impact Muang Thong Thani in Nonthaburi for up to 5,000 Covid-19 patients with moderate symptoms from Bangkok and its surrounding provinces. Translated as "topaz" in Thai, Busarakam was set up as a cooperative venture between Impact executives led by Peter and Paul Kanjanapas and the Ministry of Public Health and will mainly take on patients from what officials have labelled a "yellow" group of patients on a colour-coded severity scale. The facility has been designed to enable hospitals to focus on those needing intensive hospital care in the red group while it and other so-called "hospitals" scattered around the country provide care for those whose condition mostly requires isolation and monitoring.

### **3. Kasikornbank readies bid for Citigroup's local assets**

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

Kasikornbank has a "strong interest" in the US lender's business in Thailand and is preparing to bid as soon as the process is open, Chief Executive Officer Kattiya Indaravijaya said in a recent phone interview. "Citigroup's retail business here has a very large and good customer base." Kasikornbank joins counterparts such as Singapore's DBS Group Holdings Ltd and United Overseas Bank Ltd in expressing an interest in Citigroup's regional assets. The US bank could fetch as much as \$6 billion from selling its retail business in 13 markets across Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. For Kasikornbank, acquisitions and regional expansion are key for the lender as it fends off rising competition from new entrants into the industry especially from financial technology firms, said Ms Kattiya.

#### **4. New regulations allow some relaxation in wearing masks during meetings**

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

The Government Gazette website published the conditions issued under Section 9 of the Public Administration in Emergency Situations 2005. The announcement says that people are required to wear a mask when out of home or in public places organising events with high numbers of participants and physical proximity. If a group of persons are required to attend a meeting in a particular location for a long and continuous period of time, wearing a mask can be inconvenient and hinder performance. There is relaxation if the meeting prescribes screening measures based on disease prevention measures, social distance is maintained, the attendees are wearing a mask and show a Covid-19 test certificate of being free from infection. In these situations, the meeting supervisor may waive only during discussions or expressing of opinions at the meeting as appropriate in the circumstances.

#### **5. Estates plan timely jab distribution**

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

A state-private committee for Covid-19 vaccinations in industrial estates has been set up to help the government achieve its goal of administering 500,000 vaccine doses daily. The numbers are based on the government's plan to provide 100 million doses for 50 million people this year in order to build herd immunity, according to media reports. The new committee, chaired by Warawan Chitaroon, deputy permanent secretary for industry, is scheduled to meet today regarding vaccination venues as well as discuss cooperation with the private sector, which has vowed to help officials speed up vaccine distribution, said Kobchai Sungsitthisawad, permanent secretary for industry.

#### **6. Thai fruit and durian exporters explore Dongxing checkpoint to enter Chinese market**

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

A fleet of 13 trucks transported 275 tons of dragon fruit, jackfruit and Thai durian from Vietnam's Maung Kai checkpoint to Dongxing checkpoint in southern China. The products went through Dongxing Customs smoothly on 14 May. "The Dongxing checkpoint will become a new option for Thai companies to export fruit to the Chinese market," said Benjamas Tanvetyanont, Thai consul-general in Nanning, China. "Economic growth and agriculture between the two countries would benefit," she said. Nong Li Ching, a fruit importer, said that when there was news that the Dongxing Highway Checkpoint -- the second bridge over the Pei Lun River -- was open for importing fruit, they hurriedly arranged for import of durian, which

is now in season. Customs clearance at this checkpoint is fast, allowing them to quickly deliver fruit to consumers.<sup>7</sup>