

Thai News Update: 18 March 2020

1. Exim Thailand cuts lending interest rate to help customers amid virus crisis

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

The Export-Import Bank of Thailand (Exim Thailand) has cut its lending interest rate, comprising the minimum overdraft rate, minimum loan rate (MLR) and minimum retail rate (MRR), from 5.985 per cent per annum to 5.75 per cent, the lowest in the banking industry on 18 March, effective from March 19. Bank president Pisit Serewiwattana said the move is aimed at supporting and enabling the bank's customers and entrepreneurs to continue international trade and investment with lower operating costs amid the current global and Thai economic uncertainty sparked by the Covid-19 outbreak.

2. The nation's schools close today

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

Thailand's education minister on 17 March ordered all schools nationwide to close from 18 March as a measure to tackle the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus. The ministry's permanent secretary Prasert Boonrueng made the announcement 17 March. The permanent secretary warned that private schools who violate the announcement will have their licences confiscated, and management of government schools will be disciplined for any violation.

3. Healthmin says quarantine is now in effect for travelers from 4 nations

source: Khasoodenglish ([Link](#))

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha on 17 March again revived the possibility of mandatory quarantine for foreign travelers from high-risk countries. 17 March news conference, PM Prayut said foreigners from China (including Hong Kong and Macau), South Korea, Iran, and Italy will be subject to 14 days of health quarantine, without specifying when or how the measure will be implemented. "They will be quarantined for 14 days under the state quarantine scheme," Prayut said. "These measures are enforced at all points of entry, whether land, sea, or air." But health ministry spokesman Rungrueng Kitphati said the measure is now being enforced immediately, adding that they will be put in quarantine inside their hotels or other accommodations. "This is a

state-sanctioned self-quarantine,” Rungrueng said. “Officials will contact the foreigners everyday to check their compliance.”

4. Thai- Lao border closed in Phayao

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

The border crossing to Laos in Phu Sang district of this northern province has been closed from both sides due to the Covid-19 threat. Phu Sang district chief Wirun Sithiwong said he was informed on 17 March morning by the chief administrator of Muang Khob, on the Lao side of the border, that the Pang Mone international border checkpoint had been closed until the Covid-19 situation improves. Therefore, he ordered the Ban Huak checkpoint on the Thai side to also close, effective from 17 March. Dr Kraikus Phetcharaburanin, the provincial health office chief, said there had been no Covid-19 infections reported in Phayao.

5. Arrivals to get free SIM cards with internet

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

Mobile phone SIM cards with unlimited internet service will be distributed to inbound travellers for free before they pass through immigration counters as part of a move to help track arrivals amid the coronavirus outbreak. Takorn Tantasith, secretary-general of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), said the free SIM cards, which can be used for 14 days, will be handed by major mobile operators. Those who already have SIM cards will be given a 49-baht top-up for free.

6. Hundreds of hospital beds readied

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

The Ministry of Public Health insists there will be sufficient hospital beds to accommodate Covid-19 patients, saying 400 will be ready in hospitals in Bangkok by this week. Dr Somsak Akhasilp, director-general of the Department of Medical Services under the ministry, told media on 17 March that the public had no reason to worry about a shortage of hospital beds to accommodate virus victims. "Thanks to strong medical resources management, we are confident there will be enough beds and sufficient medical treatment for all patients if the outbreak reaches crisis level," said Dr Somsak, seeking to allay public fears of a repeat of conditions in Italy, where medical resources were overwhelmed by the scale of the outbreak.

7. BOT injects Bt35 billion into financial market to ease Covid-19 impact

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

The Bank of Thailand has injected Bt35 billion into the local financial market disrupted by the Covid-19 crisis. The central bank has closely monitored the financial market and found liquidity has become tight in bond and US dollar exchange markets, so the bank last week injected both short and long term government bonds worth Bt35 billion, assistant governor Vachira Arromdee said on March 17. The central bank also injected money into the foreign exchange market to enhance liquidity of US dollars in the market, she said.

8. BGRIM acquires 70-per cent of Ang Thong Power for Bt2.5 bn

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

B Grimm Power Plc (BGRIM) has sealed a Bt2.52 billion deal for a 70 per cent stake in Ang Thong Power Co (ATP), a small power producer. The acquisition, made through wholly-owned B Grimm Power (Chon Buri) 2 Co, consolidated BGRIM's outstanding portfolio to 3,019 MW and raising the total number of power plants in its network to 47. CEO Preeyanart Soontornwata said the share purchase of ATP, which operates a 123-MW co-generation facility in Chaiyaphum sub-district, Chaiyo district of Ang Thong province, is in line with the company's on-going business expansion both at home and abroad.

9. Rapid test kit ready for trials

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

Thai researchers have developed a rapid test kit for Covid-19 and plan to launch clinical trials next month. According to the research team led by Vidyasirimedhi Institute of Science and Technology (VISTEC), the new kit will deliver results in 30 to 45 minutes, compared to the four to six hours currently required. Chayasith Uttamapinant, a lecturer at the Faculty of Biomolecular Science and Engineering at VISTEC, said more kits are being produced for the planned trials, adding that initial tests were conducted at the Microbiology Department under the Faculty of Medicine at Siriraj Hospital.