

Thai News Update: 20 June 2019

1. Thailand revs up for summit

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

With the first Asean summit of the year around the corner, Thailand as the chair of the regional bloc plans to promote sustainability and partnership amid challenges in the current state of affairs. Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials and some academics are optimistic about Thailand's role this time, and believe the hard work that the kingdom has done over the past two years is about to pay off and become a reality. Piti Srisangnam, the director of academic affairs of the Asean Studies Centre at Chulalongkorn University, said Thailand is taking a different approach than the other rotating chairs of Asean.

2. Central reshuffle adds fintech, finance lines

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

Central Group has restructured its business lines, adding financial services and fintech to its core businesses as part of the group's vision to become a retail tech company. Montri Sithiyavanich, the group's head of financial services, said the new core business lines consist of malls and commercial property (Central Pattana); retail and brands (Central, Robinson, Central Marketing Group, Tops and Baan & Beyond); hospitality (hotels and restaurants); The 1; new economy business (JD.Com, Grab); and financial services and fintech. The group previously ran nine business units: Central Department Store, Central Pattana, Central Home Group, Central Marketing Group, Central Restaurant Group, Centara, Central Food Retail Group, COL and Central Group Vietnam.

3. Trio agree to buy 700MHz licences

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

Both the digital TV and mobile sectors have at last received financial relief via the government's Section 44 powers, with all three major mobile operators agreeing to buy slots on the 700MHz

band for a combined 56.44 billion baht. The three operators -- True Move H Universal Communication (TUC), Advanced Info Service (AIS) through subsidiary AWN and Total Access Communication (DTAC) -- submitted applications on 19 June with the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) to buy 700MHz licences, each valued at 18.81 billion baht (including VAT).

4. Exporters call for long-term rice vision

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

The new government is being urged to set a clear direction on Thai rice development, covering not just the short term but also the medium term and the long run to sustain the country's cash crop. According to Charoen Laothamatas, the president of the Thai Rice Exporters Association, the government should take into account the overall Thai rice industry, not just the price of paddy. "The best solutions should serve the overall industry," Mr Charoen said. "Rice prices are mainly reliant on demand. Thailand should promote rice production that matches consumer demand." He called on the government to be open to opinions from all stakeholders, be they farmers, exporters, millers or rice packers.

5. Bangkok Airways celebrates "World's Best Regional Airline & Best Regional Airline in Asia 2019 Awards"

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

Bangkok Airways celebrates its recent world-class achievements which are World's Best Regional Airline & Best Regional Airline Awards 2019 from Skytrax by offering exclusively-made and designed chocolate bites for passengers at its passenger lounges (domestic and international), Suvarnabhumi Airport during June 19-21. Moreover, the airline also launches the "Thank You for Your Love" promotion that offers special fares on both domestic and international routes. Booking can be made from June 20 until June 23 and can be used for travels until December 31. The "Thank You for Your Love" promotion fares start from just Bt1,100 per one way for domestic routes (except domestic in/out Samui).

6. Policy rate change ‘unlikely’ this year

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

The Bank of Thailand (BOT) is expected to maintain its policy interest rate at 1.75 per cent until at least the end of 2019, according to TMB Analytics. The next meeting of the country’s Monetary Policy Committee will be on June 26, 2019. Many central banks are likely to cut their policy rates. Although the Thai economy is likely to slow down, economic stimulus through interest rate reduction will have limited impact due to the high level of household debt, which causes a risk to the country’s financial stability. The economic outlook of various countries are seen as worsening this year and many central banks such as those of Australia, New Zealand and India, as well as neighbouring Asean countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines, have lowered interest rates at least once in the past six months.