

Thai News Update: 20 May 2020

1. BoI, state banks extend helping hand to firms hit hard by Covid-19

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

The Board of Investment (BoI) will join hands with two state-backed banks to help entrepreneurs affected by the Covid-19 outbreak, BoI secretary-general Duangjai Asawachintachit has said. “BoI will work with Small and Medium Enterprise Development Bank of Thailand [SME D Bank] and Export-Import Bank of Thailand [Exim Bank] to organise an online seminar “SME Solution for the Covid-19 Crisis” on May 28 to guide and assist entrepreneurs interested in obtaining BoI privileges” she said. “Furthermore, the BoI and the two banks will provide several measures to help those who are affected by Covid-19.”

2. Thailand No 1 exporter of computers, components in Asean

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

Thai exports of computers and components in the first quarter of 2020 rose to nearly US\$4 billion (Bt128 billion), placing it at the top among Asean nations, said Department of Trade Negotiations director-general Auramon Supthaweethum. “Rising demand for computers and related components came from increasing online activities amid the Covid-19 lockdown worldwide. Last year, Thailand ranked 6th globally in computer exports, after China, the European Union, the United States, Mexico and Hong Kong and the kingdom was the top exporter in Asean, ” she said on Monday (May 18).

3. Thailand racing to stockpile Favipiravir ahead of possible second outbreak

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

The government is stockpiling almost 400,000 doses of Favipiravir – an antiviral drug touted as a treatment for Covid-19 – in case of a second-wave outbreak while pushing domestic manufacture to reduce reliance on imports. “The Government Pharmaceutical Organisation [GPO] has imported 187,000 tablets of Favipiravir from Japan and China – 100,000 have been delivered to hospitals nationwide while the GPO has stored 87,000 as a reserve, said Nuntakan Suwanpidokkul, director of the GPO’s Research and Development Institute, on Tuesday (May 19). Treatment of each Covid-19 patient requires up to 70 tablets of Favipiravir. Nuntakan added that the GPO is researching techniques to efficiently manufacture Favipiravir domestically to reduce reliance on expensive imports.

4. Free internet for poor students planned

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

The Education Ministry has called on the Digital Economy and Society (DES) Ministry to provide internet connections to underprivileged students so they can study online via channels provided by the government during the Covid-19 crisis period. The ministry can provide internet connections in areas where TOT and CAT networks have been installed, DES Minister Buddhipongse Punnakanta said. The minister also said that internet connections will be provided for free for three months in homes that are not linked up. “This contract will be for one year, but users will only be charged Bt390 per month for the nine months,” he said, adding “around 100,000 internet device sets have been prepared”.

5. Thai GPO to produce anti-viral Favipiravir next year

Source: Thai PBS ([Link](#))

Thailand is expected to be able to produce the anti-viral drug, Favipiravir, early next year, Mrs. Nanthakarn Suwanpidokkul, a special specialist attached to the Government Pharmaceutical Organization (GPO), said on 19 May. Currently, Favipiravir 200mg tablets, which are used in the treatment of COVID-19, is under development in laboratory to find the right formula, after which the drug will go through physical and chemical analyses to determine if it meets the specifications, she said. Once the right formula is found, and the results of trials are satisfactory, the GPO will go into semi-industrial production to, initially, produce 100,000 tablets in each production unit, which are expected to undergo bioequivalence studies in January next year. The drug will be tested on healthy volunteers, after which their blood samples will be tested to determine the bioavailability. Commercial production may commence in 2022.

6. Phase 4 of relaxations may come sooner according to CCSA

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

The government’s Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration reported on 20 May that pubs, bars and entertainment facilities would be permitted to reopen in the coming weeks if the regular count of new Covid-19 cases remains in single digits. Dr Taweetilp has confirmed that the Covid-19 situation in Thailand continues to improve and has dropped to single digits for the past 22 days. “The CCSA will continue to assess the situation every 14 days and if the single digit trend continues, the reopening of “red” businesses (medium to high risk) is likely to come faster.”

7. NHSO-Thailand Post medicine delivery project sees healthy response

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

Some 111 hospitals have delivered drugs by mail to tens of thousands of patients under Thailand Post's "Drug Delivery Project to Patients by Mail" campaign, the National Health Security Office (NHSO) said today (May 19). The three-month NHSO project, which was to end on June 30, has received such a good response that it has been extended until September 30. The office will now discuss the extension with Thailand Post. The NHSO has collaborated with Thailand Post to carry out the project to deliver medicines by mail to patients under Universal Health Coverage since April 8 to reduce congestion in hospitals and control the spread of Covid-19, NHSO secretary-general Dr Sakchai Kanjanawatana said.

8. Cabinet approves bankruptcy restructuring for Thai Airways

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

The Cabinet today (May 19) approved the Transport Ministry's proposal that Thai Airways International (THAI) undergo rehabilitation under the Bankruptcy Act, said Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha. The premier declined to give details of the rehab plan, though the Cabinet has reportedly approved a plan by the Finance Ministry, which is the major shareholder in THAI, to sell 3 per cent of its shares in the carrier to the second largest shareholder, the Vayupak Fund. The ministry currently holds 51.03 per cent of THAI shares, while the Vayupak Fund owns around 15 per cent, and the Government Savings Bank (GSB) holds around 2.1 per cent.