

Thai News Update: 22 April 2020

1. CCSA panel comes up with guidelines for reopening venues

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

The Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) has established a working group to come up with measures and procedures for venues nationwide. The panel has set up a manual for operators listing measures and procedures, such as allowing customers to spend no more than an hour in a venue, refrain from large gatherings, being noisy and sharing things. Operators are also required to keep their venues well ventilated, screen customers' body temperature, insist they wear masks and clean frequently touched surfaces.

2. Cabinet approves power bill cuts for 22 million Thai households for 3 months

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

The cabinet has approved an Energy Ministry proposal for the Government to help shoulder the electricity bills of 22 million households for three months, back dated to March, to cushion the impact of business closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the proposal, a household consuming less than 150 units will be exempted from paying any charge. If it consumes over 150 units, but not exceeding 800, they will pay a charge equal to the bill for February. If the household consumes over 800 units, but not exceeding 3,000 units, they will pay the February rate plus the additional units, which will be charged 50% of the normal rate. If the power usage exceeds 3,000 units, the household will pay the February bill plus the units in excess of 800, which will be charged at 70% of the normal rate.

3. Thai Cabinet approves to extend 5000 baht a month financial assistance from 9 million people to 14 million

Source: The Pattaya News ([Link](#))

The Thai Cabinet approved this afternoon the Finance Ministry's proposal to offer a 5,000 baht (about \$150USD) monthly relief to 14 million people instead of just 9 million, the government's deputy spokesperson Rachada Thanadirek told the press. The relief package is designed primarily for those individuals who are employed within the countries informal sector, such as taxi drivers, lottery sellers or bar staff not paying into the National social security program. An estimated seven to ten million people are currently unemployed in the country due to temporary closures of businesses to help prevent the spread of the Covid-19 Coronavirus. However, some financial experts say the true number could be much higher.

4. Moguls ready to help Thailand

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

Thailand's top business leaders are ready to help the government ease the crunch of the coronavirus crisis, and plan to offer their ideas to lift the country out of the economic quagmire. The move comes after Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha sent an open letter to the country's multi-billionaires asking them to help people affected by the pandemic through assistance projects. He said he did not want cash donations. Gen Prayut said on 21 April he wrote the letter to ask the business leaders how they have helped their employees, insisting the government was not trying to borrow money from them.

5. Cabinet shifts budgets into central fund

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

The cabinet on 21 April approved siphoning 10% of the fiscal 2020 budgets of each ministry to be allocated to a central fund to fight the pandemic and rehabilitate the economy. According to Budget Bureau director Dechapiwat Na Songkhla, the government will get a total of 100.395 billion baht, most of which has yet to be disbursed and is not tied-over budget. The plan is part of the third round of government measures to stem the impact of the outbreak. These measures will focus on people living in rural areas and on stabilising the financial and capital markets. The central fund will be managed by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, empowered by the emergency decree.

6. No negative oil prices in Thailand

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

Oil prices in Thailand are unlikely to fall below zero in line with what happened in the US on Monday for the first time in history, as other index prices around the world remain intact. Energy expert Manoon Siriwan said local retail oil prices are still in a downward trend and will stay below US\$30 a barrel but are unlikely to drop into negative prices like West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil. He said WTI's below-zero prices will probably last only through May as traders rush to buy the huge supply of excess stock at record-low prices. WTI futures prices for June remain at relatively normal levels and are unlikely to go below zero again, Mr Manoon said. Crude oil futures for WTI collapsed as low demand during the coronavirus pandemic resulted in an oversupply of oil with nowhere to put it.

7. US, Asean meet to discuss crisis

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

Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai will attend a special videoconference meeting about Asean with US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo on 22 April, according to a statement. According to a ministry press release, the meeting, to be co-chaired by the Lao Foreign Affairs Minister and Mr Pompeo, will be held from 8am to 10am. The meeting is aimed at confirming common intentions to boost bilateral cooperation in dealing with Covid-19, it said. The US and Asean during the meeting will focus on exchanging information and guidelines; increasing public health emergency preparedness and responses; providing help to people in the region and the US; and protecting regional supply chains, particularly the logistics and delivery of essential items, food, medicine and equipment, the statement said.

8. Thailand developing vaccines against COVID-19

Source: The Pattaya Mail ([Link](#))

The Director-General of the Department of Medical Sciences, Dr. Opas Karnkawinpong, said that Thailand now has a team working towards the development of vaccines against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The team comprises members from various institutions, led by the National Vaccine Institute (NVI). The NVI Director, Dr. Nakorn Prensri, explained that vaccine development involves the synthesizing of ribonucleic acid (RNA), deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) or fragments of the virus. An experimental vaccine can then be tested on hamsters or monkeys to see if it has any effect on the immune system. There are three phases of clinical trials for a COVID-19 vaccine. The first phase focuses on safety, with about 30 to 50 volunteers. The next phase focuses on stimulating the immune system, involving 100 to 150 people. The third phase involves at least 500 volunteers to determine its effectiveness. If the vaccine is effective, the team will submit it to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for approval.

9. SET joins Asian slide as oil rides roller-coaster

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

The Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) Index closed at 1,252.92 today (April 21), down 13.48 points or 1.06 per cent. Total transactions amounted to Bt58.676 billion with an index high of 1,260.96 and a low of 1,243.58. A stock analyst at Krungsri Securities expected the index to fluctuate between 1,250 and 1,280 points. “The market continues to gain from hopes that the lockdown will ease, with the Covid-19 situation in Thailand improving,” the stock analyst said. “Meanwhile, the US and European countries are preparing to reopen some states, resulting in positive sentiment for economic activities and investment.”