

Thai News Update: 22 April 2021

1. Sinovac jab 'safe to use'

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

The Public Health Ministry insists the Sinovac vaccine is safe and it will continue to administer it, despite seven people suffering stroke-like symptoms after receiving it. The ministry's announcement came after Dr Thiravat Hemachudha, director of the Health Science Centre of Emerging Diseases at Chulalongkorn University's faculty of medicine, revealed on Facebook on Tuesday that seven people had suffered stroke-like symptoms after being given the Chinese company's jab.

2. Real-time payments on the rise amid pandemic

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

Thailand is ranked fourth in the world after booking 5.24 billion electronic account-to-account payment transactions last year, known as real-time payments, says ACI Worldwide, a global real-time payment solution provider, in cooperation with data analytics provider GlobalData. The amount was more than double the 2.57 billion transactions made in 2019, according to the "prime-time for real-time" report by ACI, which analysed global real-time, account-to-account payment volumes and forecasts across 48 global markets. Last year, India reported 25.5 billion real-time payment transactions, China saw 15.7 billion transactions, and South Korea had 6 billion. The firm said the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for real-time payments in Thailand has been forecast to grow 32% from 2020 to 2025, which is higher than the global projected CAGR of 23.6%. By 2025, real-time payments in Thailand are expected to reach 21 billion transactions.

3. Economy still likely to grow

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

The Thai economy is expected to grow 2.6% this year as the third wave of Covid is unlikely to affect the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) Index as much as the previous waves, says Asia Plus Securities (ASPS). Investors are recommended to increase investments in the electric vehicle (EV) and clean energy industry which has shown high potential for long-term growth. ASPS executive vice-president, Therdsak Thaveeteeratham, said the Thai stock market still has a positive outlook although the country's economy and path to recovery have been shaken by the re-emergence of Covid-19. He said the government's current measures to control the

outbreak will impact economic activities less than those enforced last year as there are no lockdowns and curfews.

4. Jet fuel tax cut extended to year-end

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

The government has agreed to extend excise tax reductions for jet fuel until the end of the year, a move to help mitigate the plight of airlines hard hit by Covid-19 outbreaks which have almost wiped out cross-border travel and tourism. Lavaron Sangsnit, director-general of the Excise Department, said 21 April the department -- with the cabinet's consent -- has announced an extension of the reduction of such tax until Dec 31 once the extension period is scheduled to end later this month. The cabinet approved lowering the excise tax on jet fuel to 20 satang per litre from 4.726 baht in February last year as part of urgent aid measures for domestic airline operators during the pandemic. The reduction expired on Sept 30 last year, but it was later allowed to be extended until April 30 this year as the impact of the pandemic on the airline industry persisted.

5. BoT sure new scheme will help SMEs

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

The Bank of Thailand (BoT) is expecting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to feel the brunt of the latest wave of Covid-19 infections. However, the central bank insists its latest soft loan scheme would allow entrepreneurs facing higher risk during the pandemic to access funds more easily. "Given the third wave and the spread of the virus, this will hurt already vulnerable SME businesses," said Suwannee Jatsadasak, senior director of the regulatory policy department 2. "However, the central bank has been closely monitoring the new wave of infections and is ready to implement additional measures to help borrowers hit by the pandemic both commercially and individually."

5. Making Bangkok greener

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

Tangling and looping electrical wires, uneven footpaths and the lack of easily accessible green space are some of the things Bangkok residents almost see as a norm in our lives. Yet, we are seeing improvements, such as the plan to move electricity lines underground along 39 major roads in Bangkok, the new smart bus shelters, and the recently announced expansion of Benjakitti Forest Park on Tobacco Authority of Thailand property. At present, there are three large public parks in Bangkok. The oldest is Lumpini Park, located in the city centre, with a total area of 360 rai. In the Mor Chit area, near the PTT head office, is Vachirabenjatas Park or

Suan Rod Fai, converted from a 374-rai golf course. The third is Suan Luang Rama IX, covering 500 rai in eastern Bangkok, serving residents in areas from late Sukhumvit, Sinakarin, Pattanakarn and Ramkhamhaeng.

7. Laem Chabang project set to sail ahead after Cabinet agrees to lower returns

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

The Laem Chabang Port development project is expected to cast off after the Cabinet agreed to adjust down the project's estimated returns to the state to Bt29.05 billion, which is the value agreed to by both bid winner GPC Consortium and the Port Authority of Thailand (PAT), PAT director-general Lt-Junior Grade Kamolsak Promprayoon said on Wednesday. The project includes the development of the third phase of Laem Chabang Port, also known as Port F. GPC Consortium, which includes PTT Tank Terminal, a subsidiary of PTT; Gulf Energy Development, and China Harbour Engineering, had previously proposed a net present value (NPV) of returns to the state of Bt12.05 billion, lower than the default amount of Bt32.2 billion the state had expected from the project. This led the Eastern Economic Corridor Office to propose to the Cabinet that it adjust the estimated returns down to Bt29.05 billion.

8. Phase 3 of 'We Travel Together' scheme opens for tourism operators

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

Hotels, restaurants and tourism operators who joined previous phases of the government's "Rao Tiew Duay Kan" (We Travel Together) travel subsidy campaign can register for the third phase until April 30. The third phase has added another 2 million subsidised room nights plus tighter regulation to solve corruption issues. Hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions, One Tambon, One Product (OTOP) operators, massage shops, vehicle rental and transport businesses who joined previous phases can register for the third phase at the Rao Tiew Duay Kan website on the following dates: