

Thai News Update: 22 June 2020

1. U-Tapao stays on course to becoming aviation hub in future

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

The development of U-Tapao Airport and Eastern Aviation City is set to take off after U-Tapao International Aviation Co Ltd (BBS Group) signed a joint investment agreement with Eastern Economic Corridor Office of Thailand (EECO) on June 19, with the goal of making U-Tapao an aviation hub. EECO has revealed that the Covid-19 outbreak has had only a slight impact on the aviation city project. Experts in the aviation industry who are advising the office said that regardless of what people say travel is an inevitability.

2. TAT looks to spur domestic travel

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

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) plans to launch domestic tourism packages to stimulate travel as the Covid-19 crisis subsides. TAT governor Yuthasak Supasorn said the cabinet has approved all three domestic tourism packages in principle. In the next step, the TAT will work out the implementation of each package and come up with strategies to stimulate travel during the first two months after packages are introduced, from July to August. Otherwise, people will have to wait until October to travel, he said. The domestic tourism packages comprise Kam Lang Chai, Thiew Pan Suk, and Rao Pai Thiew Kan. The four-month-long packages will be effective from July until October 2020.

3. Joining Trans-Pacific group 'will have no impact on Compulsory Licensing of drugs'

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

The Department of Intellectual Property has eased public concerns about Thailand losing the the right to Compulsory Licensing (CL) of drugs if it joins the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). “The CPTPP does not prohibit the use of drug CL or has any regulations that will force Thailand to extend the protection period of drug CL or allow the monopoly of drug tests,” the department said. The drug CL under CPTPP will comply with the regulations of World Trade Organization (WTO) that focuses on the use for non-commercial purposes or to remedy emergency situations such as the Covid-19 outbreak, the department added.

4. Details of two motorways projects being finalised

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

The Department of Highways has reported progress in two motorways' operations and maintenance projects, between Bang Pa-in and Nakhon Ratchasima and between Bang Yai and Kanchanaburi provinces. The Ministry of Transport will consider the details within this month, before the operation will be proposed to the Cabinet, Piyapong Jiwattanakulpaisarn, the Inter-City Motorway Division director, said. He said the department had invited bids from private corporations to operate the projects, and the the BGSR (BTS-GULF-STEER-RATCH) joint venture had emerged winner.

5. Immune response to candidate coronavirus vaccine in monkeys satisfactory

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

Thailand's coronavirus vaccine trial is making progress after macaque monkeys, which were given the first doses of the candidate vaccine, have shown a satisfactory immune response, according to Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovations Minister Suvit Mesinsee. He said that doses of the mRNA candidate vaccine were administered to the monkeys on May 23rd by researchers at the National Primate Research Centre in Saraburi province. It was discovered that all the animals remained in good health and have developed satisfactory immune responses to the virus. The second doses were injected on 22 June, into the same monkeys and, if the results are also satisfactory, the Minister said that the next step would be human trials, in either October or November, to prove safety and efficacy.

6. SCB unveils nanofinance for low-income earners

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

Siam Commercial Bank's (SCB) digital lending arm Monix has launched a nanofinance service for low-income earners, with a loan target of 300 million baht for the first year of operation. Monix, in collaboration with Chinese tech unicorn Abakus, has extended 20 million baht worth of nanofinance loans to 3,000 customers since the business's debut on May 13 through the Hahi Money app, said chief operating officer Thiranun Arunwattanakul. Most of the company's debtors are online vendors, taxi drivers and housekeepers with monthly income below 15,000 baht, she said.

7. Hoteliers prepare for a changing traveller profile

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

Although local tourists will be key to a tourism recovery, hoteliers should prepare for a change in foreign tourist behaviour, says Proud Group, a leisure and hospitality development firm. The

group's director, Proudpuh Liptapanlop, said the tourism business in the second half will depend largely on domestic tourists because of outbound travel bans and the stimulus campaign to promote domestic tourism. With the absence of international tourists, the prices at low-cost airlines will rise in the next 3-6 months, reflecting higher operation costs. The profile of travellers will change from high volume to high spenders, which could benefit Thailand in the long run, Ms Proudpuh said. With fewer tourists, Thailand will have to seek other methods to increase expenditure per person, she said.

8. Seven groups of foreigners expected to be allowed entry

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

The government plans to allow seven groups of foreigners to enter the country, Dr Taweessin Visanuyothin, the spokesman of the government's Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration, announced today (June 22). The committee has divided these into two main groups. The first group may not include those under the so-called "travel bubble" international pact as they may be required to undertake state quarantine on entry. The other group comprises travellers who won't need to go into quarantine on entry:

9. Kasetsart, EXAT to discuss new expressway plan – 20 years after project hit a series of barriers

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

Kasetsart University and the Expressway Authority of Thailand (EXAT) are planning to discuss in detail phase 3 of the northern expressway project – nearly 20 years after it came to a standstill after EXAT constructed the foundation posts and nothing much else along Prasert Manukitch Road (Kaset-Nawamin Road). The university had objected to phase 3 on grounds of safety and pollution, while the project was also dogged by budget problems, frequent political changes and a modification in construction policy between the expressway and electric train operators.