

Thai News Update: 23 April 2020

1. Thailand reports fewest infections for over a month

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

Thailand's new COVID-19 infection rate continues to decline with 15 reported today (Wednesday), which is the lowest daily figure since March 15th, when infections jumped to 32 in a single day. CCSA spokesman Dr. Taweessin Visanuyothin said that the fewer infections, as well as 244 new recoveries reported today are, indeed, very satisfactory and a reason to be proud, but he cautioned that Thailand cannot afford to drop its guard too quickly. The country's accumulated infections now stand at 2,826, while recoveries have also risen to 2,352. One new fatality was reported on 22 April, bringing the death toll to 49.

2. Trillion-baht stimulus to boost domestic debt

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

Thailand plans to borrow 600 billion baht in the current fiscal year to September and 400 billion baht in the next fiscal year to finance measures to mitigate the coronavirus impact, a finance ministry official said on 21 April. The government will borrow at least 80% from the domestic market via short and long-term debt issues and bank loans, Patricia Mongkhonvanit, the head of the ministry's public debt management office, told reporters. It will consider loans from international agencies, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, if terms are appropriate, she said. The 1 trillion-baht borrowing plan was approved by the king on Sunday. The government will open bids for four-year promissory notes worth 70 billion baht on April 29, Patricia said.

3. Thai rubber exports get boost from higher global demand

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

Thai rubber exports get a boost from higher global demand for rubber products in health care, says the Rubber Authority of Thailand. As global demand surged, particularly rubber gloves and synthetic rubber, outlook for Thailand's shipments of rubber products continued to improve, said acting governor of the Rubber Authority of Thailand Kajornsak Nuanpromsakul. Other positive factors included Malaysia's recent move to open its border for rubber and resumption of manufacturing sector in China, he said. Thailand's exports of rubber products and processed rubber such as auto tyres, rubber gloves, resistance bands and rubber bands rose 10% in the first two months of 2020, according to the Commerce Ministry.

4. Suriya eyes Bt10-billion boost for SME sector

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

Industry Minister Suriya Jungrunreangkit said this is the time for every country to focus on protecting their industrial sector, and Thailand should use this opportunity to turn its focus on the grassroots economy. Hence, he said, his ministry is allocating approximately Bt10 billion to help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that have been affected by both the Covid-19 contagion and drought. The budget, which will be taken from the rehabilitation budget, will be spent in four areas: A marketing and management project run by the Department of Industrial Promotion and others.

5. Expect second round of Bt5,000 handouts after May 8: Finance Ministry

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

The second round of cash handouts will begin in early May, assures the Finance Ministry as it is getting ready to borrow money to finance the aid package. Those who received the first Bt5,000 this month will receive another Bt5,000 in early May. Also, the number of people eligible for this aid has been expanded from 9 million to 14 million. Authorised by an emergency decree to borrow Bt1 trillion to help businesses and people affected by the Covid-19 fallout, the Finance Ministry will borrow the first batch of Bt70 billion in May, Patricia Monkhorvanit, director general of the Public Debt Management Office (PDMO), said.

6. Ratch developing new Korat gas plant

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

Ratch Group, a private power generation firm with the largest capacity in Thailand, announced a joint venture with PEA Encom International and Navanakorn (NNCL) to develop a gas-fired power plant in Nakhon Ratchasima at a total cost of 2.18 billion baht. PEA Encom is a wholly owned subsidiary of state-run power distribution arm Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA) and NNCL, a SET-listed industrial estate developer and operator. The new joint venture will be 40% owned by Ratch, 35% by PEA Encom and 25% by NNCL. Ratch reported to the Stock Exchange of Thailand on 22 April the three firms signed a shareholder agreement in Bangkok to set up REN Korat Energy to develop and operate the co-generation power plant at a capacity of 40 megawatts.

7. Unemployed? Learn a new skill and get a per diem of Bt150 for 15 days

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

The Labour Ministry will provide 15-day vocational courses to people who have been affected by the Covid-19 outbreak, Department of Skill Development's director-general Thawat

Benjathikul said on Wednesday (April 22). “We realise that many labourers and self-employed people have had to stop working due to the government’s shutdown orders to contain the contagion,” he said. “Hence the department has decided to provide courses for those who are not working at the moment so they can improve their skills and perhaps explore new career opportunities once the situation returns to normal.”

8. Five Asean countries named as high-risk for Covid-19 infection

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

Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia and Myanmar have been added to the list of countries and territories considered as high risk for the new coronavirus (Covid-19) infection on the Royal Gazette website. A Ministry of Public Health announcement on Wednesday (April 22), signed by Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, stated that the Covid-19 situation in these countries was escalating. Under Sections 5 and 8 of the Communicable Disease Act BE 2558, these countries were named as high risk for infection, in order to increase efficiency in disease prevention and control among Thai authorities.

9. Commercial flights face strict disease-control rules

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

Commercial airlines have been told to adopt strict anti-disease transmission rules when they resume domestic flights on May 1, according to the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT). While returning to the skies is the airlines' right, they must operate flights differently, said Chula Sukmanop, the CAAT director-general. The airlines, mostly low-cost carriers, will meet the CAAT tomorrow to discuss guidelines and rules for restarting flights on May 1 following weeks of operational suspension as Covid-19 has caused air travel demand to dry up. He said the rules, which factor in social distancing and disease-transmission prevention, include leaving empty seats in each row in cabins, requiring passengers to wear face masks and not serving food and drinks.