

## Thai News Update: 23 March 2020

### **1. Carriers halt international flights**

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

Thai AirAsia (TAA) and Bangkok Airways have temporarily cancelled all international flights from 22 March but will continue to operate domestic routes, the airlines announced separately on 21 March. TAA and Bangkok Airways are the second and third carriers in Thailand to introduce mass flight cancellations prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic. TAA said it hopes to resume international flights on April 25 while Bangkok Airways announced its suspension takes effect "until further notice". Thai Lion Air (TLA) was the first to suspend operations after it grounded all of its 17 aircraft on Wednesday. The airline expects to resume services on May 1, it said on Friday.

### **2. WHO praises Thailand for its efforts to contain COVID-19**

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

The World Health Organization's representative in Thailand has praised Thailand for its ability, to date, to contain the spread of COVID-19 and for being the first country, outside China, to identify a coronavirus as the cause, according to Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul. The WHO's Dr. Daniel Kertesz called on Mr. Anutin Charnvirakul at the Ministry of Public Health for discussions on the global COVID-19 situation. Mr. Anutin said Dr. Kertesz also praised Thailand's promotion of social distancing as a means of preventing the accelerated spread of the contagion. The WHO, he said, recommends four preventive measures, including frequent hand cleansing with soap or sanitizer, avoidance of facial contact with hands to prevent the virus accessing the body's soft entrances (eyes, nose and mouth), social distancing and covering the mouth and nose with the sleeve or a tissue when sneezing or coughing.

### **3. Thailand reports 122 new coronavirus cases Monday, total at 721**

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

Thailand has 122 new coronavirus cases, raising the total to 721, a health ministry spokesman said on 23 March at a news conference. The new cases include 20 patients linked to previous cases, 10 new imported cases, and 92 cases that tested positive and are awaiting investigation into how they contracted the disease, Taweessin Wisanuyothin, a Public Health Ministry spokesman said. Thailand has recorded one death since the outbreak while 52 patients have recovered and gone home while 668 are still being treated in hospitals.

#### **4. February tourist arrivals slump 42.8% y-o-y**

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

Tourist arrivals in Thailand sank 42.78% in February from a year earlier after a 2.46% rise in the previous month, due to the coronavirus outbreak, tourism ministry data showed on 23 March. A total of 2.06 million tourists in February spent about 103.7 billion baht, down 43.9% from a year earlier. Visitor numbers from China, Thailand's biggest source of tourists, tumbled 84.92% from a year earlier. Tourism is a key driver of Thai growth, with foreign tourist receipts making up 11% of gross domestic product (GDP) last year. The tourism industry as a whole is estimated to account for about 20% of GDP.

#### **5. Pandemic strategies in play**

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

Ranging from small startups to large multinational corporations, businesses across the board have been gearing up contingency plans for if the government orders a lockdown as the coronavirus pandemic escalates in Thailand. In the latest worst-case scenario projected by the Thoracic Society of Thailand, there could be 200,000 people infected with the coronavirus and 540 deaths in the period spanning next month and March 2021. Somchai Pornrattanacharoen, president of the Wholesale and Retail Association, said he does not foresee the need to lock down the country, noting that nations that have already introduced such measures have not succeeded in preventing infections. "Shutting down the epicentres of the coronavirus infections is sufficient," Mr Somchai said. "What the government should do is be more prompt in acting to handle the outbreak, and the measures taken should be more offensive than defensive."

#### **6. Thailand plans up to B100bn liquidity support fund amid pandemic**

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

Thailand on 22 March introduced measures that include a liquidity support fund worth 70 billion to 100 billion baht to reduce risk in the debt market amid the spread of the coronavirus outbreak. The Thai Bankers' Association, the Government Savings Bank, insurance providers and the Government Pension Fund set up the fund between 70 billion and 100 baht to invest in quality and newly issued corporate bonds that cannot fully roll over maturing corporate bonds, according to a joint statement issued by the Bank of Thailand, Finance Ministry and Securities and Exchange Commission." The BoT will continue to provide liquidity to the government bond market through bond purchasing to ensure that the government bond market continues to function normally, it added.

### **7. 7-Eleven expands home delivery service amid shutdown**

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

CP All Plc, operator of the 7-Eleven convenience store chain in Thailand, announced on March 22), that the company will expand its food delivery service to help people deal with the Covid-19 crisis. It aims to especially cater to people living in shutdown areas and those who want to limit social exposure and use of public transport. “We recommend using the 7-Eleven Delivery mobile application to shop for foods and consumer products and we will deliver them to you,” the company said. CP All is recruiting 20,000 delivery staff to be stationed at 1,500 branches of 7-Eleven nationwide that provide delivery services.

### **8. Finance ministry proposes cash handouts for those affected by shutdown**

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

The Ministry of Finance is planning to propose cash handouts for those who have become unemployed or been affected by the closure of business venues in Bangkok and other provinces as part of measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Ministry permanent secretary Prasong Poontaneat said measures would be proposed to the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday (March 24) to help people who are affected by the government’s order to shutdown several business venues. “Those having social security will be taken care of by the Social Security Office, while those who are not insured under the social security scheme will be taken care of by the Ministry of Finance,” he said. “We are planning to use an emergency budget from fiscal 2020 of around Bt20 billion to provide cash handouts to people affected by the Covid-19 preventive measures.”