

Thai News Update: 26 May 2020

1. Thai food giant to provide a million meals priced at 20 baht

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

Thai food conglomerate Charoen Pokphand Foods says it plans to offer heavily discounted ready-to-eat meals for those facing financial difficulties as a result of the economic fallout of Covid-19. CEO Prasit Boondoungprasert says a million meals will be distributed to Fresh Mart shops around the country and will cost just 20 baht. There will be a choice of dishes on offer and customers who purchase 5 meals at a time using the TrueWallet app will get an additional 5 baht discount.

2. Thailand to drive domestic tourism

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

Thailand plans to boost domestic tourism in the third quarter to help support the struggling economy as the coronavirus pandemic hits global travel and domestic consumption, the state planning agency said on 25 May. The export- and tourism-driven economy may shrink 5% to 6% this year, the worst since the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis due to the outbreak, the agency has said. "Other engines are off during Covid" and there are only government spending and tax measures to help the economy, Thosaporn Sirisumphand, secretary-general of the National Economic and Social Development Council, told a news briefing. The government expects to roll out a package for domestic travel from July, he said, adding the details would be clear by mid-June.

3. China-Thailand railway agreement likely be signed in October: Thai transport minister

Source: Xinhua Net ([Link](#))

The "Contract 2.3" for the Bangkok-Nakhon Ratchasima high-speed railway between Thailand and China is likely to be signed in October, said Thai Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob on 25 May. Saksayam made the announcement after attending a virtual meeting of the 28th Thai-Chinese Joint Committee with Ning Jizhe, vice chairman of China's National Development and Reform Commission. The minister said the Thai and Chinese team had agreed that the contract, estimated at 50.6 billion baht (1.58 billion U.S. dollars), involves the cost of purchasing track, electricity systems and machinery, as well as procurement of train carriages and training.

Under the contract, 80 percent of the payment will be made in the U.S. currency and the remaining 20 percent in Thai baht.

4. Thailand enters global race for COVID-19 vaccine with trials on monkeys

Source: Channel News Asia ([Link](#))

Thailand is conducting tests on macaque monkeys as it races to produce a cheaper, alternative coronavirus vaccine it hopes will be ready by 2021, a top researcher said Monday (May 25). More than 100 candidate vaccines are currently in various stages of development around the world, at least eight of which are in clinical trials with humans, according to the World Health Organization. Oxford University researchers are considered the frontrunners in the race, starting clinical trials last month on a version based on a different virus that causes infections in chimpanzees.

5. Thai industrial sector prepares to change as WTO pushes for liberalisation of medical devices

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

Thailand's industrial sector is making moves to adapt to the production of medical equipment in line with the World Trade Organisation (WTO)'s decision to seek collaboration in the production and liberalisation of medical devices. Amid the Covid-19 crisis, the Thai Garment Manufacturers Association (TGMA) is also calling on the government to set up labs for testing medical masks, personal protective equipment and other textile products, as well as improve the manufacturing standards for these products. This effort is expected to cost around Bt100 million. Yuttana Silparnitch, TGMA chairman, said these products currently need to undergo tests in the US or the EU, which takes about three months and costs around Bt300,000 per lot.

6. Tourism and Sports Ministry seeks to lift domestic lockdown

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

The Tourism and Sports Ministry wants the Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) to lift the domestic tourism lockdown starting in June, as the industry prepared for new national safety and health standards with almost 1,500 operators applying for certification. Tourism Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn said this Friday the ministry plans to talk with the CCSA about easing domestic tourism restrictions, such as allowing inter-provincial travel and hotel operations to resume in many provinces, in line with the third stage of Covid-19 restrictions. If CCSA agrees with the scheme, domestic travel will start again on June 1, but within the same region for the first two weeks, before gradually allowing inter-regional travel.