

Thai News Update: 2 April 2020

1. Thai PM says tourists will get automatic visa extensions

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

Thai PM Prayut Chan-o-cha is concerned that foreigners seeking visa extensions have been gathering in their hundreds at Thailand's immigration offices each day, at a time when social distancing is needed due to the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic. This from a spokesman for the Foreign Affairs Ministry 1 April. Deputy ministry spokesman Natapanu Nopakun announced that the cabinet has responded with a move to grant automatic renewal of tourist visas for visitors who arrived in Thailand after March 1.

2. Over 300 commercial airplanes grounded at Thailand's airports

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

Over 300 commercial airplanes have been grounded at two major airports of Thailand, Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi, due to novel coronavirus outbreak. The pandemic has caused plummeting demand for air travel around the globe and forced airlines based in Thailand to cancel some of their routes. Thai Airways, Thai Smile, Bangkok Airways and Thai VietJet Air have requested Suvarnabhumi Airport to park their planes after halting their flights due to the Covid-19 crisis, said Airport Authority of Thailand officials. Thailand's largest airport has the parking capacity for 138-150 planes. According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT), nine airlines have submitted requests to temporarily halt their flights.

3. Thailand to sanitise coins, banknotes, issue new cash

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

Thailand's Ministry of Finance on Wednesday (April 1) said the Treasury Department will release new coins and collect old ones for a thorough cleanup to help stem the spread of Covid-19. "In Thailand, cash is the main source of transactions. People still carry cash with them to buy food and items," said Yuttana Yimgarund, director-general of the department. "The virus can stick onto old coins for 5-7 days and with banknotes for 9 days," said Yuttana, adding that they will use ultraviolet light at 200 degrees Celsius to sanitise the old coins and banknotes. Yuttana said people can still use detergent to wash and dry coins under the sunlight or use alcohol to clean them.

4. Thai Immigration proposes extending tourist visas until June 30

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

The Thai Immigration Bureau has asked the Cabinet to approve a measure extending tourist visas until June 30 for foreigners stranded in Thailand following the disruption of international flights due to the Covid-19 coronavirus. According to a report in Thaivisa, the Immigration Bureau wants foreigners who have had their travel plans disrupted by the virus, be given a visa extension to the end of June. If approved, it will offer a humane response to the global crisis, which has seen up to a million travellers stranded worldwide after airlines abruptly cancelled services due to travel restrictions.

5. BoI aims to boost investment in medical sector

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

The Board of Investment is drawing up a plan to attract more investment in the medical industry in a move to boost the production of medical supplies to fight Covid-19, BoI deputy secretary-general Narit Therdsteeerasukdi said on Wednesday (April 1). The plan will be tabled for the BoI board's consideration on April 10. Narit added that the plan would focus on offering high tax incentives to encourage large investments in the field and will specify a timeframe for the products to be launched in the market. If manufacturers are able to meet the deadline, they will be eligible to enjoy the tax benefits.

6. Ministry to deliver 1m masks in capital

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

The Industry Ministry announced the first batch of free washable face masks, 1 million of 10 million in total, will be sent via Thailand Post to households in Bangkok on April 8 as part of the government's strategy to stem a shortage of masks. The ministry expects to deliver the remaining 9 million masks by May. "We will start delivering masks on April 8 and expect people in Bangkok will receive them April 11," said Industry Minister Suriya Jungrunreangkit. Mr Suriya said the government will ship 2.5 million masks every 15 days, with the goal of distributing 10 million masks in total. "The Industry Ministry is teaming up with Thailand Post and the Interior Ministry to deliver washable facial masks to people in Bangkok using house registration," he said.

7. 70% Thais stick to social distancing

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

Some 70% of Thais understand and are engaging in the "social distancing" campaign -- a major strategy to curb the transmission of Covid-19-- according to the latest survey conducted by the

Department of Mental Health. The department conducted the survey last week among 26,000 respondents. The study's goal was to find out the appropriate measures needed push the campaign to exceed the 80% milestone, Dr Kiattiphoom Vongrachit, director-general of the Department of Mental Health, told media in a press briefing on 1 April.

8. 777 work-from-home applicants getting DES help

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

A total of 777 government agencies and state enterprises have qualified for the Digital Economy and Society (DES) Ministry's assistance programme to support officials working from home by offering free downloadable work platforms and free internet access during the pandemic. These state entities are among 865 organisations encompassing 682,152 users that applied for the three-month scheme, said Vunnaporn Devahastin, secretary-general of National Digital Economy and Society Committee. The scheme does not include academic institutes, schools or universities as they have already been granted special assistance. The application period ended on 31 March. The government is working with four digital platform providers and six telecom operators on the scheme.

9. World Bank optimistic of Thai economic recovery next year despite likely contraction in 2020

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

The impact of the Covid-19 outbreak will be severe beyond expectation, the World Bank warned but added it was confident that Thailand has the financial resources and innovative policies to deal with the challenges. Thailand's gross domestic product is forecast to be in negative territory -- between -3 and -5 per cent this year -- Kiatipong Ariyapruchya, World Bank's senior economist for Thailand, said on Thursday (April 2). This would lead to contraction of household consumption, private investment and exports, he said, but was optimistic the economy would recover next year and in 2022, with GDP estimated to expand 4 per cent and 3.5 per cent respectively.