

Thai News Update: 2 February 2018

1. Thailand Could Go Cashless Within Three Years

Source: ASEAN Today ([Link](#))

Digital payments took off in Thailand in 2017. The volume of mobile payments for June 2017 reached 694 billion baht (US\$22.1 billion). It is a significant increase from 440 billion (US\$14 billion) the previous June. Mobile and internet banking has been steadily increasing. The conditions are ideal for the expansion of the e-payment industry. Veerathai Santiprabhob, the Governor of the Bank of Thailand believes a cashless society would improve Thailand's global competitiveness. Reducing transaction costs through e-payment systems will benefit all sectors of society. The chairman of the Thailand E-Payment Trade Association (TEPA) believes Thailand could go cashless within three years. Punnamas Vichitkulwongsa made the comments in August 2017. Thailand is not ready to go cashless in 2018. But the infrastructure is there to make the transition in the next three years. There are still barriers. However, events like Seamless provide an opportunity to overcome them. Players in the e-payment sector are regularly collaborating and sharing experience. Innovative solutions will materialise.

2. 168 Projects in EEC Get Green Light

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

The government has approved 168 infrastructure development projects worth a combined 989 billion baht for its flagship Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) scheme. Kanit Sangsubhan, secretary-general of the EEC Office, said the infrastructure development plan was approved on 1 Feb by the EEC Committee chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha. The plan will come in three phases: urgent, intermediate and long term. The urgent phase, during 2017-18, aims to lure both domestic and foreign investment to the EEC; the intermediate phase of 2019-21 focuses on transport development; and the third phase, from 2022 onwards, aims to create sustainable development and bolster the infrastructure network to link neighbouring countries.

3. SpherePay to Launch Own Cryptocurrency

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

A leading mobile payment platform in Southeast Asia has announced in a Thursday press release that it is set to launch its own cryptocurrency in the coming few months. Singapore founded SpherePay said it will introduce the world's first shared economy blockchain platform in working partnership with ODYSSEY (OCN). This would set a milestone for a Singapore based company to introduce a new technology on a global scale. According to SpherePay's development plan, the company will officially open the encrypted currency wallet and QR code payment function in March 2018. This new development will see SpherePay as the only mobile payment platform in the world that enables the virtual currencies to be transacted in real life.

4. Bangchak sets Bt113 bn for Diversification

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

BANGCHAK Corporation Plc and its subsidiaries have set aside a five-year investment budget of Bt113 billion for the period 2018-22, focusing on alternative energy, green innovation, and environment both domestic and overseas, the company's president and chief executive officer Chaiwat Kovavisarach said at press conference on 1 Feb. Up to one-third of its budget, about Bt37.66 billion, would be to develop the group's bio-complex at Chachoengsao province, located in the Eastern Economic Corridor. The complex will combine bio-based products, energy storage, food supplements, research and development, and bio-based materials, he said. Currently, the company has businesses in Thailand, the Philippine, Japan as well as Indonesia. BBGI Co Ltd's chief executive officer, Pongchai Chaichirawiwat, said the company plans to invest in developing 500 rai at Chachoengsao province as a bio-complex, focusing on biological products.

5. Merchants Slow to Adopt EDC Systems

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

The Finance Ministry will encourage merchants to install swiping devices for credit and debit cards after the number of merchants equipped with point-of-sale terminals under the national e-payment scheme was found to be 140,000, still far below the target of 560,000. Although the installation of electronic data capture (EDC) terminals under the national e-payment scheme has made great strides in terms of device numbers, with 480,000 in place, the number of merchants is still too low,

said finance permanent secretary Somchai Sujjapongse. Since the service was launched early last year, cumulative PromptPay transactions number 97 million, with 370 billion baht transferred via the channel.

6. Inflation Forecast Raised on Wage Hike

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

The inflation rate this year is expected to edge up thanks to an improving economy and the daily minimum wage hike. The government has raised its forecast for the country's inflation rate this year to 0.7-1.7% from 0.6-1.6% as an improving economy and daily minimum wage hike are expected to push up consumer prices. The government has raised its forecast for the country's inflation rate this year to 0.7-1.7% from 0.6-1.6% as an improving economy and daily minimum wage hike are expected to push up consumer prices.

7. Cash-strapped Foreign Office sells Bangkok embassy for £420m

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

The scale of financial pressure on the British diplomatic service has been underlined by a Foreign Office announcement that it has raised £420m by selling its embassy in Bangkok to fund modernisation projects across its global estate. The sale represents the largest land deal in Thai history and the Foreign Office's biggest ever sale. The department said the proceeds, equivalent to a third of its core annual budget of £1.2bn, would pay for 30-40 modernisation projects around the world, including renewing the wiring in its Paris embassy and refreshing the decor at the Washington embassy. The Bangkok embassy is being sold to a joint-venture consortium of Hongkong Land, a member of the Jardine Matheson Group, and Central Group. The new embassy will be based in the AIA Sathorn Tower in the central business district.