

Thai News Update: 3 April 2018

1. Thai Government Promotes Use of Rubber To Support Price

Source: Nikkei Asian Review ([Link](#))

Thailand, the world's biggest producer and exporter of rubber, is seeking to increase local demand for the commodity by providing financial support to buyers, as well as encouraging all government agencies to use more of it. Agriculture Minister Grisada Boonrach said the government was trying to attract private companies, in particular small and medium enterprises, to innovate and invest in the production of more finished rubber products, such as condoms, gloves and mattresses, and move on from the past focus on exporting it as a raw material for use in the tyre industry. Boonrach, who oversees the Rubber Authority of Thailand, said the government would set aside a certain amount of budget to help absorb the loan burden of SMEs, giving them more financial liquidity to buy up rubber from farmers. The military government has already taken the aggressive step of removing the head of the RAOT, Titus Suksaad, using a 'Section 44' measure, which effectively gives the ruling junta the power to intervene where it sees fit. His replacement is Thanawat Pholwichai, who has been tasked with raising the rubber price within the next few months.

2. Tier-Two Cities Urged For ASEAN Airlines

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

The Transport Ministry will propose airlines in Asean countries operate direct flights to secondary cities in Thailand to cope with travel industry growth. Transport Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith said he will put forward the suggestion to Asean transport ministers at a meeting later this year and ask airline operators in the region to operate direct services from their countries to secondary Thai cities. Thailand has unofficially raised the topic with some Asean ministers ahead of the Asean Transport Ministers Meeting and Asean Senior Transport Officials Meeting, both of which will be convened in Thailand this year. Air route expansions aim to support growing intra-region travel and the increase of arrivals from the region, particularly China. The government is engaging in several projects to prepare for the long-term growth of the aviation industry, including expanding Suvarnabhumi airport and the aircraft maintenance and training

centre at at U-tapao airport, Mr Arkhom said. Last year it carried 19.8 million passengers, half from Southeast Asia. That number is expected to hit 23.2 million this year as it added seven new aircraft.

3. Bot Spreading Promptpay Reach

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

The Bank of Thailand is in talks to link the country's PromptPay with Singapore's PayNow to allow users in both countries to send money to each other using mobile phone numbers. The cross-border fund transfer is a next step for PromptPay, a cheap fund transfer service using only mobile phone numbers or citizen IDs, said Finance Minister Apisak Tantivorawong. Since the service was launched early last year, there have been 97 million PromptPay transactions, with 370 billion baht transferred and 37 million savings accounts used to sign up for the service, of which 25 million were opened with citizen ID numbers and the rest with mobile phone numbers, said permanent secretary for finance Somchai Sujjapongse in early February. PromptPay is part of the national e-payment scheme, designed to move Thailand towards a cashless society in tandem with the government's Thailand 4.0 model. Four large banks -- Bangkok Bank (BBL), Siam Commercial Bank (SCB), Krungthai Bank (KTB) and Kasikornbank (KBank) on 28 March made a surprise push into digital banking by offering free transactions on their digital platforms. The aim is to attract more customers and monitor their financial behaviour, which is crucial for banks to compete with new players from platform giants like Alipay.

4. Thai Ministry Of Finance Sets Tax Framework For Cryptocurrency Trading And Investments

Source: Coinspeaker ([Link](#))

The rapid expansion of the cryptocurrencies becomes a threat for the governments. The sphere has incredible pace of development and obviously lacks the regulations. Even though the progress cannot be stopped, governments all over the world consider different ways of resisting the financial crimes in the sphere. Money laundering, tax evasion – the world of the cryptocurrencies has a lot to offer to the black market. Thailand's military government recently made a big step towards the crypto sphere regulation. Finance Minister of Thailand Apisak Tantivorawong announced on the 27 March that the government of the country wants to regulate the crypto sphere and sets the

relevant tax framework. The news came out after a weekly cabinet meeting. The decision of Thailand's military government is seen as a conservative one. However, it got support from influential representatives of the society. Korn Chatikavanij, the former finance minister and chairman of the Thai Fintech Association, said: "They have to be cautious not to allow their conservative instincts to result in draconian regulations."

5. Cyberthreats Ratcheting Up

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

Cybersecurity threats in Thailand are intensifying, the country's ranking dropping last year to 18th-worst from 25th in 2016, with cryptojacking in particular on the rise, says Symantec, a leading information security firm. "Cybersecurity threats in Thailand worsened in 2017, compared with 2016, because there were more connected devices and higher interest in cryptocurrencies and exchanges," said Sherif El-Nabawi, senior director for Aisa-Pacific system engineering. Citing the "Symantec Internet Security Threat Report 2018", he said of the 157 countries and territories Symantec's intelligence systems charted globally last year, the cybersecurity threat environment in Thailand ranked seventh-worst in Asia-Pacific, a dip from ninth in 2016.