

## Thai News Update: 10 April 2018

### **1. Hilton Deepens Push Into Region**

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

The Asia Pacific and Southeast Asia remain a key growth engine for Hilton, said Paul Hutton, vice-president, operations, for the hotel group in Southeast Asia. “We are seeing an emerging market in Southeast Asia, especially due to rising urbanisation across the region and the growth of a sizeable middle class in the region who are keen to travel,” he said. “With our strategy to fill gaps with the right brand, in the right location, at the right time, the opportunities presented to us are abundant and there is a huge potential for the growth of our brands in the region.” Hutton said that this is why in 2017, Hilton introduced the first Canopy by Hilton into the region, sealed a landmark portfolio deal comprising six hotels in Sri Lanka and obtained four significant approvals in Vietnam. “Thailand, too, is a key growth market for Hilton, with a forecast rise of 6 per cent in tourism numbers this year after hitting a record 35.38 million in 2017, equivalent to half of Thailand’s population.” Hutton said that with such a strong prospect for travel and tourism, Hilton is excited to be introducing its ultra-luxury brand Waldorf Astoria to Bangkok in the third quarter of this year, which is slated to mark the brand’s debut in Southeast Asia. Hutton said that Hilton has been steadily growing since 1919 and now operates 5,284 hotels across the world, with 34 of them in the region: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Its properties in the region account for 0.6 per cent of Hilton’s total properties worldwide.

### **2. Watchdog Opposes Easing Of Licence Payment Terms For Mobile Operators**

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

An Anti-Graft watchdog on April 9 asked the government not to grant controversial requests by two major mobile-phone network operators for easing of licence upfront payments. The Anti-Corruption Organisation of Thailand (ACT) said it shared a common view with scholars and certain social elements that there are no good reasons to justify government aid. The government would better seek a resolution on this issue through the National Legislative Assembly, it suggested. Advanced Wireless Network (AWN) and True Move H Universal Communication

(TUC), in separate requests to the junta last September, sought ways to allow them to divide the final instalments of the 900MHz spectrum licence upfront fees into seven tranches. Also yesterday, True Corp – the parent of TUC – met with the press for the first time regarding the matter. True defended its request for government aid, insisting that its request would not hurt the public’s interest. ACT said on 9 April that if the junta wanted to assist any parties by invoking its special powers under Article 44 of the interim charter, which is also allowed under the new Constitution, it must be in the public interest. AWN and TUC are scheduled to pay the hefty final instalments of Bt59.574 billion and Bt60.218 billion, respectively, in 2020. The junta had consulted the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) on the two operators’ requests.

### **3. 3m At Risk From Robotics Rise**

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

The Bank of Thailand forecasts 3 million workers will suffer on account of automation and robotics use over the next decade. Nuntanid Thongsri, an economist for the central bank’s economic and policy department, said those in recursive jobs will be the first group affected, including manufacturing workers and cashiers, as they will be replaced by robotics systems. "The key change for Thai entrepreneurs is the hike of the daily minimum wage to over 300 baht nationwide and the cost of automation and robotics, which declines every year. Many firms can invest in these technologies, which are more stable and precise than humans," she said. According to Bank of Thailand research, there are 6 million workers in the industrial sector. But there are only three sectors that have utilised automation and robotics system at their manufacturing facilities over the past 10-15 years: automotive, rubber and plastics and electronics. The central bank said the government and policymakers have to come up with a solution as Thai firms are going to be lacking in needed skills to meet changing trends.

### **4. Analysts Warn Of Disruptive Wave**

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

Business organisations need to transform or risk being left behind because the effects of disruptive technologies will come more quickly than expected, say leading business technologists. "Business organisations need to drive transformation faster, within one year, not three years as many have planned," said Orapong Thien-ngern, chief executive of Digital Ventures, the fintech subsidiary of Siam Commercial Bank. The financial industry is being rocked by exponential technologies such

as blockchain, artificial intelligence, big data, quantum computing and security, said Jason Yap, global risk advisory and innovation practice leader of Deloitte Southeast Asia. Ananda aims to become a seamless property service platform by utilising exponential technologies to develop quality of life upgrades in modern living, covering safety, speed and convenience in the areas of housing, commuting, work, health and personal finance. Nuttapon Nimmaphatcharin, president and chief executive of Digital Economy Promotion Agency, said the government has to reduce digital exclusion, especially availability access for children and people with disabilities.

## **5. NBTC Drops Demand For Mobile Phone Aid**

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

The telecom regulator has finally backed off support for assisting the country's two mobile giants after facing weeks of heavy criticism from academics and the public sector, who argue that Advanced Info Service (AIS) and True Move have not suffered enough to warrant support. The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) will no longer back the plan to relax the two companies' 900-megahertz licence payment scheme. "The state must decide if the measure is in the public's interest. The National Council for Peace and Order [NCPO] and the government must decide if they agree with the arguments against the planned assistance," said NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith. AIS and True Move submitted a petition to the NCPO on Sept 21 last year asking for assistance in easing their licence payment terms, which was followed by the Association of Digital TV operators, who submitted a proposal to the NCPO on Oct 17.