

Thai News Update: 16 April 2020

1. Thai Chamber of Commerce floats phased lockdown lift

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

The Thai Chamber of Commerce is preparing to deliver its plan to lift the lockdown to the government. Chamber chairman Kalin Sarasin said his team has drafted a blueprint to reopen venues and businesses gradually according to the risk level of zones where they are located. The zones are divided into a “traffic light” arrangement – green, yellow and red – with red signalling the highest level of Covid-19 transmission.

2. China presents medical supplies to Thailand symbolizing strong friendship

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

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health Anutin Charnvirakul received 100,000 surgical masks, 20,000 N95 masks and 2,500 PPE suits from Charge d’affaires of the Chinese Embassy Yang Xin. Anutin said the support from China is a symbol of friendship between the two countries. The equipment meets Thailand’s need and will, to help provide protection for doctors, nurses and public health officers, who are working in the front lines fighting the pandemic. The medical equipment from China is a such a valuable gift to Thailand for Thai New Year.

3. COVID-19: Thailand extends ban on passenger flights until end-April

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

Thailand has extended a ban on incoming passenger flights until the end of April in a bid to curb the COVID-19 outbreak, the country's aviation body said on Wednesday (Apr 15). The ban was first introduced on Apr 4, and the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand has already extended it in once until Apr 18. Since the outbreak escalated in January, Thailand has reported a total of 2,613 cases and 41 deaths, while 1,405 patients have recovered and gone home.

4. Chonburi malls among first in country to reopen

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

Chonburi was among the first provinces in the country to partially lift its lockdown on Tuesday (April 14) as some shops reopened. However, its popular maritime gateway of Koh Loi Pier will remain closed until the Covid-19 crisis is resolved, said provincial governor Phakthong Thianchai. Ships plying the route to Sichang Island are exempt from the order and still operating. Shops in malls permitted to open for business from Tuesday (April 14) included banks and finance-related outlets, smartphone repair centres, supermarkets, pharmacies,

restaurants (takeaway service only) and zones selling electrical appliances, kitchenware, computers or construction equipment and related items.

5. Thailand boosts exports of rubber products amid COVID-19

Source: Vietnam Plus ([Link](#))

Thailand is maintaining exports of rubber products and processed rubber as global demand surges, particularly for those relating to protective gear against COVID-19 such as rubber gloves and synthetic rubber used to make such gloves. Auramon Supthaweethum, Director-General of the Trade Negotiations Department under the Ministry of Commerce, said Thailand's outbound shipments of rubber products and processed rubber in the form of finished products such as auto tyres, rubber gloves, resistance bands and rubber bands rose 10 percent in the first two months of 2020 to 1.97 billion USD. Free trade agreements (FTAs) were one of the reasons behind higher shipments, she said, adding that Thailand has 13 FTAs in place with 18 countries and territories, with 14 no longer collecting import tariffs on Thai rubber products, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Peru and Hong Kong.

6. Financial relief approved for employees affected by Covid-19 outbreak

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

Employees whose businesses were not ordered to shut down by the government but are still affected by Covid-19 situation will get compensation under the social security scheme, the Cabinet agreed on Wednesday (April 15). The measure was proposed by the Ministry of Labour, ministry permanent secretary Sutthi Sukosol said. "The compensation will be similar to what employees whose businesses were ordered to close are paid, which is 62 per cent of daily wage based on a maximum monthly salary of Bt15,000 for a maximum period of 90 days," he said. "The ministerial regulations are expected to be issued within this week."

7. Restrictions can be lifted, but very gradually, experts say

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

Experts suggest that restrictions can be eased in some areas, provided it is not done all at once and everywhere. Owing to the drop in new confirmed Covid-19 cases, an informed source said that after Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha chaired a meeting with the government's Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) on Monday (April 13), the authorities signalled a chance of easing restrictions on businesses that have been forced to close. There were only 28 new cases on that day. The governor of Nonthaburi province made the first move in easing restrictions, but reversed his position soon after he was hit by criticism.

8. Commerce Ministry ready to haggle

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

The Commerce Ministry is scheduled to meet manufacturers, modern trade operators and department stores on 16 April to ask for cooperation on lowering prices of essential goods for consumers, with a focus on food and daily use products to reduce the cost of living for people hurt by the pandemic. Local diesel prices, which is a key production and transport cost, have dropped and the world's economy remains in a slowdown, said Prayoth Benyasut, deputy director-general of the Internal Trade Department. Retail diesel prices over the past few months have dropped continuously, with 11 price adjustments in March alone, reducing production costs for manufacturers by 1-3%, said Mr Prayoth.

9. Thailand BOI Approves Steps to Ease COVID-19 Impact, Accelerate Investment in Medical Sector

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

The Board of Investment of Thailand (BOI) on 15 April approved a series of measures to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus or COVID-19 outbreak on business, including steps to encourage rapid investment in the manufacturing of medical equipment. The board also approved incentives to promote technology-based “smart farming” solutions as well as research and development in a broader range of sectors. “In face of the unprecedented situation resulting from the virus outbreak, we have taken a range of measures to address the urgent needs of affected business sectors,” Ms Duangjai Asawachintachit, Secretary General of the BOI, said at a press briefing after a board meeting chaired by Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-ocha in Bangkok.

10. KBank eyes expansion in Indonesia

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

In a move to reinforce itself as a regional digital bank, Kasikornbank will expand its presence in Indonesia by boosting its holding in PT Bank Maspion Indonesia Tbk (Bank Maspion) to 40 per cent from 9.99 per cent. The total investment in Bank Maspion will not exceed US\$130 million (Bt4.24 billion). KBank's acquisition of additional shares in Bank Maspion has been approved by the Bank of Thailand and is in the process of being approved by Indonesia's financial business supervisory agency, Otoritas Jasa Keuangan (OJK), which should be finalised mid this year.

