

## Thai News Update: 24 December 2018

### 1. Commerce Ministry Touts Taobao Model

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

Thailand wants to start applying the Taobao Village model to help tackle poverty and raise community income via e-commerce and digital technology in February, starting with Ban Na Kha, Muang district in Udon Thani and Phu Khae, Chalerm Phrakiat district in Saraburi. Commerce Minister Sontirat Sontijirawong said the ministry plans to develop three or four communities next year to raise income under the Taobao Village model.

### 2. Hotels Expand Despite Low Room Prices

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

Foreign and local investors continue to expand their hotels in Thailand to cope with tourism growth, but the sector is being challenged as the average room rate here has remained the lowest among big cities in Southeast Asia. An influx of international arrivals and strong domestic travel are driving the hotel push. The Tourism Authority of Thailand predicts that 40.3 million foreigners will visit the country next year, while locals will make 177 million trips.

### 3. Thai Travellers To Japan Top 1 Million

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

The number of Thai travellers to Japan has topped 1 million this year, making Thailand the first country in Southeast Asia to reach that threshold amid Tokyo's efforts to attract overseas visitors through the relaxation of visa requirements. The number of Thai visitors during the first 11 months period was estimated at 1,003,800, up 15.2% from a year before, according to data from the Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO). Given fast economic growth in the region, travellers to Japan from six Southeast Asian nations -Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam -surged nearly six-fold from 2011 through 2017.

#### **4. Ministry Eyes Digital Skills For 4 Million**

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

The Digital Economy and Society (DE) Ministry aims to train 4 million people in digital literacy through its Net Pracharat course, as well as in the Sustainable Thainess programme offered by the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (NFE). The plan is an attempt to lessen the digital divide in the country and build up e-commerce capability among communities nationwide, in line with the national broadband network for villages. The DE Ministry and the NFE started providing the digital literacy training course to villagers in December 2017 after the first phase of the Net Pracharat project finished in 24,700 villages, with 1 million trainees passing the course.

#### **5. High-Value Residential To Be Main Driver Of 2019 Realty Growth**

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

Challenges await property developers next year with the Bank of Thailand (BOT) poised to implement a more restrictive regime on mortgage loans starting April 1, along with the recent rise in the policy rate, and an expected slowdown of the country's economic growth, according to realty experts. Origin Property Plc's chief executive officer Peerapong Charoon-Ek agreed with AP (Thailand) Plc's chief executive officer, Anupong's assessment, saying that the new central bank regime will have little impact on real market demand. He expected growth of up to 10 per cent next year.

#### **6. Sold Out: Ghb Home Loans Snatched Up**

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

Government Housing Bank (GHB) will budget another Bt50 billion to help low-income earners buy homes after the entire budget for the programme was booked on the same day it was introduced. GHB chief executive Chatchai Sirilai announced the extension of the scheme on 23 December after thousands of people queued at GHB branches across the country, beginning early in the morning, to reserve loans to buy houses designed for low-income earners and priced under Bt1 million. The bank had set aside Bt50 billion for the programme, enough for about 50,000 homebuyers. The state-run bank is offering low-interest loans that can be repaid over 40 years.

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People earning less than Bt25,000 a month will be charged a fixed 3 per cent interest for the first five years. People earning more pay 3 per cent interest for the first three years.