

## Thai News Update: 24 February 2020

### **1. 5G is about to be real**

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

After years of hype, hope and techno-futuristic promises, Thailand will finally see the beginnings of the fifth generation of wireless broadband as the nation's telecoms bet big on 5G. On Feb 16, the three major mobile operators and two state telecom enterprises bid a combined 100 billion baht at the auction for the spectrum required to set up 5G infrastructure. The high winning prices raised eyebrows among industry experts, media outlets and the general public. The haul the state raised is the envy of neighbouring governments and a big blow to the budgets of domestic telecom companies.

### **2. Finance Ministry earmarks B100bn for tourism**

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

The Finance Ministry is preparing to offer 100 billion baht in soft loans as a lifeline to coronavirus-ravaged tourism operators as part of new relief measures that will seek the cabinet's approval by early March. The soft loans, sponsored by the Government Savings Bank (GSB), will be offered through commercial banks with an interest rate of 3-4%, said a source familiar with the matter who requested anonymity. Operators who do not need fresh funds will be entitled to other financial assistance, such as debt suspension and interest rate reductions, the source said. The Bank of Thailand will consider easing regulations for commercial banks in return for their aid to customers.

### **3. State agency to accelerate public-private projects**

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

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects will be speeded up with quicker disbursement of budget funding, State Enterprise Policy Office (Sepo) director-general Prapas Kong-led said. He said the office planned to disburse funding of around Bt350 billion. "At the end of January, the office has a cumulative disbursement plan of Bt35.399 billion which can disburse Bt37.279 billion, accounting for 105 per cent of the plan," he said. "Sepo aimed to disburse not less than

90 per cent from the investment budget this year.”He further explained that Sepo this year aimed to collect Bt188.8 billion, up Bt20.8 from the previous year, from state enterprises and businesses in which the Ministry of Finance holds less than 50 per cent stake.

#### **4. EV charging stations to be set up at 50-70km intervals**

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

A government committee has given the nod to increase the number of charging stations for electric vehicles (EV) to cover community areas and main roads between cities. The decision was made at a meeting of the Energy Policy Administration Committee chaired by Energy Minister Sonthirat Sonthijirawong. Sonthirat said on February 21 that “the interval for each station should be in the range of 50-70 kilometres”. “This is to solve congestions in big cities and allow people in outer urban areas to have supporting facilities for their EVs.” We have meanwhile directed the embassy in Japan to take care of the Thais who are trapped aboard the cruise ship Diamond Princess.”

#### **5. Foreign Ministry puts all embassies on virus high alert**

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

The Foreign Affairs Ministry has ordered embassies and consulates around the world to make sure Thais in their jurisdictions are well taken care of amid the Covid-19 virus threat. Minister Don Pramudwinai said he had ordered them to provide care as needed as well as guidelines for staying healthy and reacting if they fall ill.“All countries are carefully monitoring the situation, which currently is focused on the increasing number of infected people in South Korea,” he said.“We have meanwhile directed the embassy in Japan to take care of the Thais who are trapped aboard the cruise ship Diamond Princess.”