

Thai News Update: 5 March 2020

1. Virus hype sparks online surge

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

People's engagement through social media and e-marketplace platforms rose sharply from January to February, whipped up by the coronavirus outbreak, says the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC). The trend was illustrated in a recent online survey conducted through the Prute Ti Maat (behaviour measurement) app developed by the NBTC. Giant e-marketplace Shopee saw people consume an average of 41.4 megabytes (MB) of bandwidth per person in February, a 479% jump from January. Lazada saw a rise of 122% in the consumption of bandwidth per person from January, while Grab posted a 74.3% rise.

2. New stimulus economic packages to help all sectors affected by coronavirus

Source: Thai PBS World ([Link](#))

Thailand's Finance Ministry is to roll out a new set of stimulus measures to help all sectors of Thai society currently affected by the COVID-19 situation, which has hit at the same time as an economic slowdown, an export slump and drought. Finance Minister Uttama Savanayana said on 4 March that the first package will be proposed to economic ministers on 6 March, after which it will be forwarded to the cabinet for finalization, adding that he expects the package, if it is approved, to start to bear fruit in June or July this year.

3. Thailand gives Laos medical supplies to combat COVID-19

Source: Xinhua News ([Link](#))

The government of Thailand has given medical supplies to Lao Ministry of Health to aid in COVID-19 response and prevention. The items were handed over on 2 March by the Ambassador of Thailand to Laos, Damrong Kraikruan, to Lao Minister of Health Bounkong Syhavong, local daily Vientiane Times reported on 4 March. The supplies comprised 2,040 bottles of gel handrub and 50,000 medical gloves. Bounkong thanked the government of Thailand for its assistance and for providing the valuable supplies to the Ministry of Health.

4. Thailand's mega-computer fair to be held as planned

Source: Xinhua Net ([Link](#))

Shrugging off fears of the COVID-19 outbreak, organizers of the annual mega-computer fair said on 4 March that its 'Commart X Pro 2020' IT fair will be held on schedule from March 5-8 in Bangkok. "We cannot cancel because everything has been prepared and laid out," said Pornchai Chantharasupphasaeng, the organizer for the event, "We have some major partners like Advice IT Infinite and Banana IT, whom had cancel their participation, but we have other big ones like JIB, IT City, SPVI and many other retailers of computer and IT-related products." "I want to give assurance to visitors that we have put out stringent measures to prevent COVID-19 outbreak," said Pornchai, "we will be limiting the number of entry and exit points to the fair and will deploy thermal scanners at all gates.

5. Ayutthaya World Heritage Fair postponed

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

The Ayutthaya World Heritage Fair 2019, scheduled for March 13-22, has been postponed indefinitely due to the coronavirus threat. The fair is usually held in the middle of December every year. Because of budgetary constraints, the Ayutthaya World Heritage Fair 2019 was put off until March 13-22. Because of the Covid-19 threat, an urgent meeting of the organising committee, chaired by provincial governor Panu Yaemsri, was held on 3 March. The meeting decided to postpone the fair again for an indefinite period.

6. CP considers setting up US shrimp farm

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

Thailand's billionaire Chearavanont family is considering setting up a shrimp farm in the United States, as President Donald Trump's administration tries to curb America's reliance on seafood imports. The agro-industrial arm of the family's conglomerate, Charoen Pokphand Group, said it's looking at several potential locations, including Florida, as well as other sites less prone to hurricanes. "It's an important project for us," Prasit Boondoungprasert, chief executive officer of Charoen Pokphand Foods Plc (CPF), said in an interview. "We sent a team to go live there, study the market and the law, and find a suitable location."

7. Tycoons ready to splash out on Tesco

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

The battle between Thailand's retail titans for Tesco is heating up, with all three giants saying they have placed bids for a deal that is expected to be one of Asia's biggest transactions this year. A source at Charoen Pokphand Group, the country's biggest agribusiness conglomerate, confirmed on 4 March that CP Group had submitted a bid for UK-based Tesco's Asia business, while a Central Group source said the group also filed a bid. Both sources asked not to be named and declined to provide further details.

8. Finance Ministry to table first set of relief measures on Friday

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

The Finance Ministry will propose to the Council of Economic Ministers on 6 March a plan to hand out Bt1,000 each to around 10 million low-income earners as part of its first relief package to mitigate the economic impact of the Covid-19 outbreak. Minister Uttama Savanayana said on March 4 that the ministry would propose the first set of relief measures to the meeting. If approved, they will be forwarded to the Cabinet on March 10. He has assured that the measures would be in line with fiscal discipline. If they failed to lift the economy, he still has other options at his disposal, Uttama said.

9. SEC approves rollout of 17 Super Savings Funds for long-term investment

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

The Securities and Exchange Commission has approved the launch of 17 Super Savings Funds (SSF) as of March 4, SEC Secretary General Ruenvadee Suwanmongkol said on Wednesday, adding that they would be available to investors soon. Once the Revenue Department publishes investment conditions and tax incentives of the funds in the Royal Gazette, the Association Investment Management Companies will make an announcement on the terms of investment transaction approved by the SEC, she said. The SSF mutual fund scheme was initiated by the Finance Ministry to offer investors an alternative for long term savings, and will replace the long-term equity fund(LTF) which expired at the end of last year.