

Daily Thai News Summary: 8 December 2015

1. Thailand, Cambodia agree to strengthen cooperation in trade and investment

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

Thailand and Cambodia have agreed to strengthen ties in trade, investment, and other forms of cooperation, aiming for double-digit annual growth in bilateral trade from now on. The agreement was struck at the fifth meeting of the Thai-Cambodian Joint Trade Committee held in Bangkok last week, co-chaired by Thai Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn and Cambodian Senior Minister of Commerce Sun Chanthol. Apiradi said that over the past few years, trade with Cambodia had continued to grow strongly despite the economic slowdown.

However, both Thailand and Cambodia recognised that there was still tremendous room for the growth of trade and investment between the two countries, particularly after the Asean Economic Community is fully implemented by the end of this month. Thailand reaffirmed its intention to import more products from Cambodia to improve the trade imbalance between the two countries, since Cambodia faces a trade deficit with the Kingdom. Both sides will strengthen cooperation in exploring ways and means to expand trade and investment, particularly border trade, which has contributed significantly to trade between the two countries.

Cambodian also acknowledged Thailand's proposal on economic cooperation between the two nations' border provinces. Cambodia will also consider Thailand's proposal on the establishment of a Thailand-Cambodia Joint Expert Group on Border Trade to discuss in detail the growth strategy and will respond to Thailand by the first quarter of 2016. Both sides also agreed to accelerate the finalisation of the two memoranda of understanding on the exchange of traffic rights for cross-border transport under the initial implementation of the Cross-Border Transport Agreement to expand the vehicle quota, and bilateral negotiations on the Agreement on Road Transport between the two nations.

2. Thailand set to gain from adventure tourism event

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

The Pacific Asia Travel Association and the Tourism Authority of Thailand will stage the first adventure mart in the Kingdom next year, with the aim of promoting more destinations throughout the region and boosting arrivals from niche markets. The Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart will be held at Dusit Island Resort in Chiang Rai on February 17-19. The event will lure buyers from around the world to meet sellers from Thailand

and elsewhere. *"As of last Friday, we had received 30-40 per cent more [bookings] from buyers compared to this year's event in Bhutan. More sellers are expected to join the event,"* PATA chief executive Mario Hardy said.

Almost 60 per cent of those buyer bookings are from Europe, 14 per cent are from Asia, 11 per cent from North America, 11 per cent from Australia, 3 per cent from South America, and 3 per cent from Africa. Most of the sellers are from Thailand and Southeast Asia. Hardy said adventure tourism had become more popular for tourists worldwide and would remain so for the next decade. The regional adventure conference and mart aims to highlight more adventure attractions in Thailand and Southeast Asia for the global market and build awareness of adventure activities in each destination. *"Adventure tourism can create more jobs and also help small and medium-sized operators gain business,"* Hardy said.

3. Govt to spend big on digital economy boast

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

The Information and Communication Technology Ministry has said it will spend Bt3.7 billion next year on driving flagship projects of the digital economy. Manoo Ordeedolchest, a member of the government's Digital Economy Committee, said that the money left over from the one-tablet-per-child project. Manoo said that the flagship projects covered five themes - hard infrastructure, soft infrastructure, service infrastructure, promotions and innovation, and the digital society and knowledge.

He said that under the promotions and innovation flagships, a budget of around Bt600 million had been allocated. The ministry would conduct three flagship projects including developing a global trade item number (GTIN). It would also support tech startups and develop village commerce nationwide. He said that the ministry would work with the Federation of Thai Industries to develop a business framework that would make it easier to provider local products to the global market. Manoo said that the FTI would develop and provide a GTIN of international standard that would be an identifier for trade items, product information and product codes. It could be used to look up product information on a database. The GTIN would apply to manufacturing, retail, lifestyle, medicine and herbal products. As a result, customers would be able to track products.

4. Support plan to help SMEs to cope with globalization

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

The Commerce Ministry has come up with a project to train 230 small and medium-sized enterprises and support them to trade in the international arena. Pongpun Gearaviriyapun, director-general of the Business Development Department, said recently that her department in cooperation with the Industry Ministry, Office of SMEs Promotion and Board of Trade plan to strengthen local SMEs in each province so that they can compete amid the globalisation trend.

Each governor will select SMEs from his province in three categories - start-ups that have operated from one month to three years, rising stars, medium-term enterprises that have operated for more than three years. Among the 230 SMEs, 150 are from manufacturing, 41 are from trading and the service business, 39 are from agro-industry. After they are taught operations, accounting, product and service development and drafting of trading and marketing plans for penetrating overseas markets, the department and the Board of Trade will arrange business matching sessions for them. They will meet with overseas traders so that they can have a chance to penetrate new markets or form joint ventures.

5. Le Meridien plans global family initiative

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

To cash in on the growing family segment of the tourism industry, Le Meridien Hotels and Resorts Group is rolling out a global campaign to create incremental business growth of 5-10 per cent. George Fleck, vice president of Le Meridien and Westin Hotels & Resorts, two of the upper-end brands of the global hotel chain Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, said out of 6 million guests who stayed at one of 104 Le Meridien hotels last year, only 20,000 were children.

Yet, Le Meridien foresees a good opportunity to grow the leisure segment by introducing its Le Meridien family campaign, in addition to the corporate and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) segments in which the hotel group already has a strong foothold. This is because no other 5-star global hotel brand has introduced a similar campaign at this scale to serve the family segment, he said. *"We want to lift occupancy in the segment that we had never targeted specifically,"* Fleck said. Le Meridien Suvarnabhumi, Bangkok Golf Resort & Spa was chosen as the venue to kick-off the group's global family campaign on November 28.

The family campaign will be rolled out at 100 Le Meridien Hotels and Resorts globally. A similar campaign was also launched for the Westin brand at one of its New York hotels early this month. As a result, more than 300 hotels globally will launch the family campaign, he said. Catering to the growing global demand for family travel and the evolving needs of travellers

with children, Le Meridien Family will comprise three key elements: Next Gen Kids Clubs; Destination Unlocked; and a Lego toy complimentary welcome amenity.

By Harsha Hazarika