

## Daily Thai News Updates: 2nd December 2016

### 1. Holiday Tax cut expected to liven GDP

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

The government's plan for increased holiday tax breaks to spur domestic consumption in December will boost economic growth to 3% this year, says the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI). "Thailand's gross domestic product (GDP) will expand by 3% this year as exports are expected to improve to zero growth from last year's contraction of 6%, while the holiday tax breaks and other stimulus measures will also lend support," said director Kirida Bhaopichitr. TDRI estimates that the tax break, which is aimed at triggering a shopping spree amid stalling consumer confidence and spending, will bolster sentiments in the final month of this year, but it could add less than one percentage point too GDP growth, she said.

### 2. Four-year plan aims to boost tourism

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

The National Tourism Policy Committee has unveiled a four-year plan to enhance tourism competitiveness and has also approved a special zone focusing on four islands in southern Thailand. Deputy Prime Minister General Tanasak Patimapragorn yesterday said the committee would organize a series of training programmes for three groups involved in the tourism sector.

The three groups are: tourist guides and tour operators; service providers; and citizens/private sector. "During the four-year programme, more than 107,020 people are expected to undergo training," Tanasak said. More than 10,000 tourism operators are also expected to get quality certification three or four months after training. He added that the programme was part of the national tourism policy which has been focusing on enhancing competitiveness as the government wants to shift the overall tourism emphasis from volume to quality. The National Tourism Policy Committee also approved a plan to develop a special zone for tourism in southern Thailand. The newly designated area will cover Koh Samui, Koh Pha-ngan, Koh Tao, and Kog Ang Thong.

### **3. EU ‘Green card’ for Thailand expected over IUU fishing**

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

Thailand will at some point receive a “green card” from the European Union for its efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, once the EU realizes the real progress the government is making in this regard, according to Steve Trent, executive director of the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF). After meeting with Agriculture Minister Chatchai Sarikulya during the “Asia Regional Conference on Building Ocean Health: sharing experiences to move towards sustainable fisheries management”, held in Seoul on Tuesday and Wednesday this week, Trent said the EJF had seen the progress made to date by Thailand in solving IUU problems in the fishing industry and believed the country’s work and good intentions would be recognized and Thailand removed from the “IUU Report” of the EU. “Thailand will succeed in getting a green card after being given yellow-card status almost two years ago. But I don’t know when, and the EU would like to see long-lasting measures for sustainable fishing,” he said.

The EU will continue to visit the Kingdom to inspect the country’s efforts next year, while the EJF will continue to forge closer ties with Thailand, helping it to combat IUU fishing and create sustainable development for the fishery sector, he added.

### **4. New Mekong pact to boost capitals’ connectivity**

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

A major expansion of economic-corridor networks and new areas for economic investment valued at US\$32.6 billion (Bt1.2 trillion) will strengthen links between the capital cities of Mekong countries, according to the agreement revealed at the 21st Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Ministerial Conference in Chiang Rai province yesterday. This will provide unprecedented opportunities for cross-border trade and investment, officials said.

In a statement issued at the conference, the ministers noted the importance of economic corridors in the sub region’s development, and emphasized “the need to transform the GMS economic corridors into logistics hubs to support cross-border trade, investment, tourism, and stronger cooperation. The ministers endorsed 107 projects under a new regional investment framework implementation plan valued at \$32.6 billion. They examined ways to enhance competitiveness and accelerate inclusive development in the GMS, and reviewed the long-term strategic framework for the sub region’s economic and social development. The ministers also

highlighted new trade and transport measures that will take effect in 2017. These include implementation of the GMS Cross-Border Transport Agreement, the expansion of single-stop customs inspections at key border crossing points to reduce processing time, and the introduction of a GMS road transport permit that would further facilitate the cross-border movement of vehicles, people, and goods.

### **5. Decathlon plans to step up local production**

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

Decathlon, one of the world's biggest sports retailers, plans to make more sporting goods in Thailand after opening nine stores here. Frederic Bichet, chief executive of Decathlon Thailand, said the company will gradually increase local production of its goods, lowering store prices by more than 20%. Decathlon imports most of the items it sells in Thailand. Locally made products account for only 10% of its goods. Having more locally made products will give Thai consumers easier access to products at Decathlon stores. The first Decathlon stores in Thailand were opened last year. It now has seven in Bangkok and one each in Pattaya and Chiang Mai. "Our expansion in Thailand is faster than in other countries," Mr Bichet said. "We took almost two years to open nine stores here, while we spend around one year to open one store in other countries."

**By Shreya Chopra**

