

Daily Thai News Updates: 23 January 2017

1. Get ready for visitor inrush, PM tells agencies

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

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has ordered related agencies and the private sector to prepare for an anticipated influx of foreign visitors this year. Gen Prayut cited several forecasting agencies, including Kasikorn Research Center (K-Research) and the Center for Economic and Business Forecasting of the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce (UTCC), which predict that the number of foreign tourists will surge this year from 32.6 million in 2016. K-Research forecast foreign visitors will total 33.5-34.5 million this year, generating income of 1.76 trillion baht, up from 1.64 trillion last year. "Overall positive conditions, from Thailand's economic prospects to the global economic recovery, will be a boon to global tourism, including Thailand," said Gen Prayut at the cabinet meeting last week. "We, the government and private sector alike, have to prepare for the influx of tourist arrivals, particularly in terms of infrastructure and related facilities." The government has set its tourism revenue target at 2.71 trillion baht this year, an 8% rise from 2.51 trillion in 2016.

2. BoT braced for US impact

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

The Bank of Thailand says it will work to maintain stability in the Thai financial market, which is expected to face increasing volatility prompted by the new US president's policies. "Tonight there'll be a major shift in the world, as we are going to have a new US president who announced economic policies that are different from any policy we're familiar with, which may cause a short-term fluctuation in the market," said Bank of Thailand governor Veerathai Santiprabhob. The global financial market already experienced a wild ride after the presidential election last November, he said, adding that the fluctuations caused a firmer US dollar after Donald Trump's victory before a soft reversal in recent weeks. The greenback's volatility reflects uncertainties associated with Mr Trump's policies and his new administration, Mr Veerathai said.

3. Trade officers prepare for Trump era

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

Amid concern over the impact on Thailand's export growth of so-called "Trumponomics" under the new US president and the United Kingdom's Brexit vote, Thai trade officers from 63 posts in 47 countries will attend a meeting in Bangkok on February 22 that has been called by Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak. Deputy Commerce Minister Sontirat Sontijirawong said US President Donald Trump's trade policy and Brexit – the UK's electorate's decision to leave the European Union – were the two major factors of concern in regard to their effect on global trading this year. "Thai trade officers will discuss and brainstorm for trade strategies to handle any unexpected trade measures that might be imposed by the US against China or others. Although US trade policy should not have a direct impact on Thai goods exports, indirect trade effects on exports to China and Asean countries are expected – and Thailand should therefore draw up new strategies to drive export growth," he explained. At next month's meeting, four Thai trade officers in the US – based in Washington DC, New York, Los Angeles and Chicago – will report on Trump's new trade policy and the potential impact on Thailand's trade, and that of other countries.

4. Visa incentives may last longer

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

The Tourism and Sports Ministry will propose to the cabinet next Tuesday to extend visa incentives for at least another three months in a bid to lure more foreign tourists and drive the industry during the low season. The plan is expected to offset the sharp drop of Chinese tourists following the government's zero-dollar crackdown in late September last year, said Tourism and Sports Minister Kobkarn Wattanawangkul on the sidelines of Asean Tourism Forum 2017 in Singapore. The cabinet last year waived visa fees and halved the visa-on-arrival fee to 1,000 baht for tourists from 19 countries from Dec 1, 2016 to Feb 28, 2017. This special visa scheme benefits visitors from Andorra, Bulgaria, Bhutan, China, Cyprus, Ethiopia, India, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Romania, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

5. Asean tourism industry goes all out to increase international arrivals

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

Fifty years of Asean is being celebrated with tourists offered new initiatives and packages in a bid to boost international arrivals to the region. The 10 Asean nations are attempting to strengthening their tourism industries in the hope of increasing international arrivals to the region from 109 million in 2015 to more than 120 million this year. As part of the push, the region has created an inaugural regional tourism campaign, Visit ASEAN@50, after the Association of Southeast Asean Nations (Asean) was founded at Thailand's Bangsean beach town in 1967. Devinder Ohri, the new president of the Asean Tourism Association (ASEANTA), said that the campaign aimed to attract international arrivals from North America, Europe, the Middle East, China, Japan, India, and Oceania. He said Asean was the fastest-growing area for tourism and travel, and people around the world were coming to the region. In response to the influx, he said the World Travel and Tourism Council had urged the region improve its infrastructure. Sounh Manivong, director general of the Tourism Marketing Department of the Laos Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism, said the body would promote local activities along with the country's unique culture to international markets this year. He said it would also focus on more on the MICE market (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions)... Asean tourists to Thailand grew from 7.8 million in 2015 to 8.7 million in 2016 and that figure is expected to reach 9.3 million this year.

By Rajnee Narula

