

Daily Thai News Updates: 26 May 2017

1. Laos asks for longer hours at checkpoints

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

Travel operators in Laos have urged the Thai government to extend the closing time at border checkpoints to promote tourism in both countries. They also asked Thai hotel businesses to invest in the landlocked country as there is high potential for tourism there, according to Tourism and Sports Minister Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul. The minister had a meeting with tourism operators in Laos recently to discuss more tourism cooperation between the two countries. She said Lao tourism operators want the Thai government to extend the closing time at border checkpoints in Nongkhai and other provinces linked with Laos to midnight from 10pm to facilitate cross-border. Laos needs more processing time at checkpoints because transport over there is strictly controlled by speed limits," Ms Kobkarn said. Many Vietnamese tourists travelling to Thailand through Laos would also be able to spend more time in either country.

2. Fingerprinting for SIMs made mandatory

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

All mobile users must participate in the online fingerprint ID system for new prepaid and postpaid mobile SIM card registration, or they will not be allowed to use mobile service. The automated fingerprint registration system, implemented by the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), is set to start from Jan 1, 2018, said secretary-general Takorn Tantasith. Earlier, the NBTC had conducted fingerprint registration on a voluntary basis. The regulator unveiled the first fingerprint ID machine to the media Thursday, with a plan to launch the first batch of 30 machines on May 31. Mr Takorn said 25 of those machines will be installed in three provinces in the deep South: Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat. The fingerprint ID system is aimed at creating greater security and benefits for mobile users, especially mobile banking service. He said the number of fingerprint registration machines will be delivered to mobile operators nationwide, with 30,000 machines targeted by year-end. "From Jan 1, all mobile users must participate in the system if they want access to mobile network service," he said.

3. SCG eyes innovation in EEC

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

Siam Cement Group (SCG), the industrial conglomerate, plans to invest more in next-generation industries, particularly in new innovation products, in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). President and chief executive Roongrote Rangsiyopash said the company aims to invest in high-value added industries in the EEC and is working on the investment plan, expecting to complete it by the end of this year. “We are interested in new innovation products and the lifestyle industry,” said Mr Roongrote referring to the products that serve changing lifestyle, which has strong potential to grow. Prior to the EEC, SCG had also invested in the eastern region by developing petrochemicals plants in the Eastern Seaboard in Rayong province decades ago...The new investments could be in both greenfield project and an expansion of its existing investments in Rayong, he added. “Let see what the feasibility leads to at the end of the year,” Mr Roongrote said. SCG posted net profit of 56 billion baht in 2016, up from 45.5 billion baht in 2015.

4. Rules called for foreign OTT

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

A group of local over-the-top (OTT) operators have urged the national broadcasting regulator to establish the same standards for foreign players to create a level playing field in the industry. Company registration and filing for starting a company should be imposed on foreign OTT giants like Facebook, YouTube, Line and Netflix in the drive to combat rampant piracy on OTT. The call was made after a meeting of Thai OTT video operators, who pay fees based on Subscription Video on Demand or SVoD and Advertising-Based Video on Demand or AVoD such as BBTv's Bugaboo, 3Live, Monomaxxx, LINE TV and GMM Grammy. The NBTC will call on the top 100 popular content providers on YouTube and Facebook to participate in a forum to discuss regulatory policies for OTT services. The forum is scheduled to take place from 6-7. The popular content providers on Facebook are defined as the top 100 accounts with the most followers...A group of Thai OTT video operators also suggested that the NBTC ask foreign OTT operators to register as well as provide basic information to regulators in order to allow it to rein in piracy in problem.

5. China's mighty Belt and Road ambitions

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

Two weekends ago, China put on a massive show when world leaders gathered in Beijing for the Belt and Road Forum to hear President Xi Jinping outline his plan for a grand project: the Belt and Road Initiative. If you haven't heard much about the project, also known as One Belt, One Road, expect to hear a lot more in the future. Basically, it's about building massive things. It's a long-term transcontinental plan to build infrastructure such as roads, bridges, railways, ports and gas pipelines in Asia and beyond. This idea was initiated by President Xi in 2013 and has been hailed by China as the project of the century. Many of us feel that the world seems to have turned upside down lately, especially since Donald Trump became president of the United States and Mr Xi started to portray himself as a responsible leader dedicated to globalisation. The Belt and Road, in this context, fits well with Mr Xi's narrative in which China sets the example for globalisation, filling the void left by the US under President Trump's inward-looking policy. The Belt and Road builds on the historical tradition of the ancient Silk Road. The "Belt" refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt that improves land transport between China, West and Central Asia, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia via six economic corridors. The "Road" refers to the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road that seeks to enhance sea transport to Europe and the Pacific. Together, they are meant to be a revival of the ancient Silk Road trading routes. So far, 65 countries including China, as well as international organisations, have signed up for this huge infrastructure venture. Together they account for 62% of the world's population, 40% of global trade and 30% of its economic output.

6. Excise tax organic laws set by August

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

Organic laws for the new excise tax that will change the tax base computation to recommended retail prices are expected to be announced by August, the Excise Department's chief says. Tax payments are expected to rise after replacing ex-factory prices and costs, insurance and freight (CIF) values with recommended retail prices as the latter is typically higher, but organic laws are meant to mitigate the tax burden, keeping it marginal, said director-general Somchai Poolsavasdi. He insisted the new excise tax law will be fair for those who pay the proper amount of tax...The new excise tax will take effect from Sept 16 and the department is drafting 80 organic laws.