

Daily Thai News Updates: 5 May 2017

1. Sustainability key to avoiding pain while ensuring long-term gains in tourism

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

Short-term gain has all too often been the driving force in the tourism industry, despite the long-term pain that this attitude can lead to. This cautionary view is worth bearing in mind when it comes to safeguarding and nurturing the health of the sector here in Thailand over the coming years. On the face of it, the consistent flow of visitors to the Kingdom gives very little cause for anxiety. While 2016 had more than its share of disruptive factors – the sad passing of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and unfortunate bombing incidents in Hua Hin and Phuket among them – they didn’t appear to act as a deterrent. Indeed, the number of foreign tourists visiting Thailand rose nearly 9 per cent to 32.6 million in 2016, bringing in Bt1.64 trillion worth of business, up nearly 13 per cent from 2015. Those are undoubtedly impressive figures and ones that give me, as minister for tourism and sports, enormous satisfaction. Nevertheless, it is vital that we capitalise on this strong foundation to lay the groundwork for a more sustainable future for tourism in this country. Booming visitor numbers are all very well, but the condition of the sector relies on so much more than just tourist arrivals.

2. Panel to oversee single info window

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

The national committee on logistics development yesterday gave the green light to the establishment of a unit for management and development of a single window linking electronic information for imports, exports and logistics. Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak said the Customs Department had been instructed to undergo organisational restructuring to cope with the additional tasks for the development of an electronic information-exchange system between the private and public sectors in the country and overseas that met international standards. “In regard to the national single window, the Customs Department will act as the intermediary to connect information domestically and overseas, particularly in the Asean region. This will have an impact on the World Bank’s ranking [of Thailand] for ease of doing business,” he said. The planned subcommittee will also monitor and assess public agencies’ progress in cutting red tape in trade of strategic products including sugar, rice, rubber, frozen products and hazardous items.

3. 13 groups gets nod for tourism cash

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

The Tourism Department has approved a budget of 1.3 million baht for 13 community tourism groups to develop tourism personnel and infrastructure. "We plan to provide financial support for 120 community tourism groups in 2017 so they can strengthen their service capabilities," said Wanasiri Morakul, director-general of the department. The department recently held its first meeting to screen tourism development proposals from local communities. Thirteen community tourism groups in 10 provinces were awarded grants to improve their tourism services. The grants from this programme can be used for a wide range of development activities in line with their needs, Ms Wanasiri said.

4. Export of Thai food to hold strong

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

Thailand's food exports are unlikely to see many negative effects from US President Donald Trump's protectionist trade policies, according to the International Trade Promotion Department. Malee Choklumlerd, the department's director-general, said yesterday after a workshop on food and crop shipment prospects that the ministry was still confident in its 5% growth target for 2017, up from US\$7.9 billion (619 billion baht) last year. Mrs Malee said food is an essential product boasting strong demand worldwide, including the US, while many Thai products cannot be produced by importing countries. She said that despite Mr Trump's protectionist policies, Thai exports of food to the US are expected to eke out growth this year. Last year, Thailand registered \$4.3 billion in food shipments to the US market, up 10% from a year before. For the first three months of this year, Thailand shipped \$873 million worth of food exports to the US market, down 5.9% from the same period last year.

5. Prayut wants port, rail progress report

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

The government wants a progress report by the end of the month on its priority schemes: the projects to link three major deep-sea ports and the construction of the railway projects to link the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). The EEC Policy Committee has ordered the Transport Ministry, the Industry Ministry and the navy to work together in finalising the plan to link the ports of Map Ta Phut, Laem Chabang and Sattahip within a month, said Industry Ministry Uttama Savanayana. "The plan should be ready for submission to the prime minister at the next meeting on May 26," Mr Uttama said. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha is scheduled to chair the meeting and observe the progress of the EEC around the U-tapao airport area that day. The government also wants to see the progress of the plan to develop the rail projects that would link the EEC to other regions of the country, Mr Uttama said. "Foreign investors are very keen to see any progress on the rail projects because rail is seen as the cheapest, most efficient logistics system," he said. The EEC is the government's latest flagship project, meant to be the growth engine to drive the Thailand 4.0 era using high technology and innovation to add value to products and services.

6. Thai ISPs to pressure Facebook on illegal sites

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

Eleven local Internet service providers have agreed to pressure Facebook to delete the accounts of webpages that contain content that is illegal in Thailand. Takorn Tantasith, secretary-general of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, said the NBTC had collaborated with local ISPs to block many websites deemed as illegal, and more than 600 were set to be blocked next week. However, many such sites have URLs on servers located outside Thailand, which are more secure than those based here. "We are waiting to negotiate with Facebook to find measures to close the illegal webpages so that URLs that provide content in Thailand must practise under Thai law," Takorn said. Local ISPs provide 95 per cent of the Internet services in Thailand. However, some sites the authorities disapprove of get around local blockages by registering on Facebook. Therefore, on Wednesday 11 members of Thai Internet Service Provider Association (TISPA) sent an e-mail to Facebook asking for its cooperation.

7. Accessories fuel bicycle market surge

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

Thailand's bicycle market is expected to see healthy growth this year driven by the accessories segment as the number of cyclists expands, says N.C.C Exhibition Organisers (NEO), a bicycle show organiser. Bussaya Prakobthong, general manager of NEO, said Thailand's overall bicycle and accessories market is expected to expand 7% this year 7.5 billion baht. Of that amount, bicycle sales are estimated to make up 4.5 billion baht, up 5-7% from a year before, with accessories worth 3 billion, a 15% rise from 2016. The low-end bicycle segment, with prices below 10,000 baht, control 80-90% of the market, she said. However, bicycle priced from 20,000 – 900,000 baht are becoming popular, particularly for sports riders, said Ms Bussaya. She said cycling enthusiasm in Thailand is in line with the global trend for bicycle sales as well as the country's economic growth upswing. "The Thai bicycle market is considered an emerging market, so we still see ample room for growth," said Ms Bussaya. The number of Thai bicycle owners increased sharply from 2.2 million in 2015 to 3.2 million in 2016, with an estimate of 4 million bikers at the end of this year, she said.