

Thai News Update: 11 September 2019

1. Thailand first in Asia to roll out plain cigarette packaging

Source: CNA ([Link](#))

Thailand rolled out plain cigarette packaging on 10 September, the first country in Asia to introduce what activists say is an effective way to reduce the appeal of smoking. In 2012, Australia became the first country to require tobacco products to be sold without colourful brand logos. Since then, a host of mostly European countries have followed suit, including France, Hungary and the UK. Thailand agreed last year to comply with the World Health Organisation guidelines, and packs officially showed up in stores on 10 September. Businesses have until Dec 8 to phase out stocks before facing fines of up to 40,000 baht (US\$1,300).

2. Thailand's jump to high-income status at risk: Fitch

Source: Business Times ([Link](#))

Thailand is at risk of a protracted slowdown in the next decade, on the back of its ageing population and lack of economic reforms, analysts at Fitch Solutions have suggested. While the kingdom could still become a high-income country by 2028, the Fitch economists warned in a research report that Thailand is “at risk of missing out on this transition due to a failure to overcome considerable structural challenges” to the economy. The report cited risk factors such as a median age of 39.7 years - the highest among the 12 emerging markets surveyed - as well as slowing growth in gross domestic product per capita, a fragmented government that may struggle to pass reforms, and a perception of high corruption.

3. Bangkok retains crown as top destination

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

The annual Mastercard Global Destination Cities Index has again named Bangkok the No.1 destination city globally and in Asia-Pacific, with more than 22 million international overnight visitors. The index contains a region-specific subset for Asia-Pacific. This is the fourth straight

year the capital has grabbed the top spot in the global index, which ranks cities in terms of number of international overnight visitor arrivals, cross-border spending and other factors. It's also the ninth year in a row Bangkok has held the top position in Asia-Pacific. Bangkok reported 22 million visitors in 2018 who stayed 4.8 days on average and spent an average of US\$184 (5,634 baht) a day during their Bangkok trip. Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo and Seoul retained the top five spots in Asia-Pacific, fuelled by travellers from mainland China.

4. Expats rate Thailand as 25th best spot

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

Thailand ranked 25th out of 64 destinations to live and work worldwide in the Expat Insider 2019 survey by InterNations. The survey provides in-depth information about expats' satisfaction with quality of life, ease of settling in, working life, personal finance, cost of living and family life in their country of residence. Published for the sixth year, the survey had more than 20,000 respondents. Thailand ranks high on the personal finance and cost of living indices, at 13th and 15th, respectively, down from the previous year, when it was sixth and fourth. Expats noted Thailand for ease of settling in and working life. Thailand ranks 16th for work and leisure. In the family life index, Thailand ranked high for options for children's education and childcare.

5. 65% of Laem Charoen sold to MK Group

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

Laem Charoen Seafood, a 40-year-old Thai restaurant chain, expects stronger business results after selling a majority stake to SET-listed MK Restaurant Group last Friday. Chaitas Narakulsookpipat, the company's managing director, said the company decided to sell the stake to MK because it is confident the partnership will bring about synergy and improve business. Laem Charoen has been in the 400-billion-baht Thai restaurant industry for four decades and hopes for sustainable growth with the partnership. "MK Restaurant is a very successful chain in Thailand because it has expertise and knowledge from being in the business for a long time," said Mr Chaitas.

6. Cabinet approves steps towards "ease of doing business"

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

Among the key measures included in "Thailand Plus Package", a new package drawn up to attract foreign investment, is the easing of procedure for foreign investors in applying for visa and work permit. Citing a Cabinet decision on September 10 approving the new measures, Phalang Pracharat spokesman Kobsak Pootrakool said under the new package, foreign investors could deduct cost for career training in the field of advanced-technology field by 250 per cent from 200 per cent, effective immediately until the end of next year. Kobsak, in his capacity as secretary of the Council of Economic Ministers, said new hiring of Thai employees with special skills by foreign employers in the four fields under STEM educational doctrine - science, technology, engineering and mathematics - could enjoy 150 per cent corporate tax deduction from now until the end of 2020.

7. New digital trading platform to be made part of national agenda

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

Rachada Dhnadirek, deputy government spokesperson, said the Cabinet has approved the setting up of a National Digital Trade Platform and has assigned the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) to work with related agencies and the Joint Standing Committee of Commerce, Industry and Banking (JSCCIB) to achieve this. The JSCCIB comprises of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trade, Federation of Thai Industries and the Thai Bankers Association. Rachada added that the prime minister has also called on all sectors to make the development of the digital platform part of the national agenda and link it with the Asean Single Window to create an online trading system with Asean countries.