

Thai News Update: 12 June 2019

1. New Government Faces Tough Policy Choices

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

More than 100 billion baht a year is needed to fund welfare schemes vowed by the new government, according to Fiscal Policy Office (FPO) estimates. The actual welfare spending, however, will hinge on the coalition government's final decisions, taking into account the available budget and the scope of assistance provided, said director-general Lavaron Sangsrit. Take the old-age living allowance as a prime example. Policymakers must consider whether they will offer the 1,000-baht monthly living allowance, a key campaign promise, either across the board or only to low-income earners, Mr Lavaron said. The basic welfare benefits for 14.5 million smartcard holders will not be stalled, he said, while additional welfare provided under economic stimulus measures, including an extra 200 baht a month allowance for the disabled and a subsidy hike to 500 baht a month for goods purchases at Thong Fah Pracha Rat shops will end after they lapse.

2. Guangdong Investors Plan Digital Park To Cooperate With GBA

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

An investor group from Guangdong has expressed interest in investing in a new digital park facility in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), as the Chinese province seeks to bolster cooperation in industry investment and tourism development. The government aspires for the digital park project to become an innovation and technology centre for Asean in partnership with China's Greater Bay Area (GBA) development scheme linking Hong Kong and Macau with nine provinces in China's mainland. The Guangdong investors' plan is unrelated to the Digital Park of Digital Economy Promotion Agency in Sri Racha, Chon Buri. Ge Changwei, director-general of the Guangdong Development and Reform Commission, said Chinese investors are seeking business opportunities in the corridor and local partners to establish this project.

3. Complaints Spur Iuu Assessment

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

The Commerce Ministry has scheduled a joint meeting with the Fisheries Department next week to evaluate the impact of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing practices on domestic fishing operators after mounting complaints about a flood of imported fishery products from neighbouring countries. Wanchai Varavithya, deputy director-general of the Foreign Trade Department, said the Thai fishing business is less competitive than rival countries because compliance with IUU rules means production costs are 30-40% higher. Countries that disregard IUU fishing are first put on notice and issued a yellow card. At this stage, called pre-identification, the EC will open a formal dialogue with the state and observe the situation for at least six months. If the country shows improvement in anti-IUU fishing efforts, the observation period will continue until the yellow card is eventually rescinded.

4. Depa Keen To Up Tech Force

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

The Digital Economy Promotion Agency (Depa) has plans to assist in producing 40,000 digital and tech-related workers per year by 2022, doubling the current level, through skills courses designed by major tech companies. The 84 selected digital skill courses were suggested by four companies: Google, Microsoft, Cisco and Huawei. The courses are expected to begin in the fourth quarter this year at major universities, aiming to supply talent on a broad enough scale to support the country's competitiveness in the digital economy. The move is part of the Digital Thailand initiative to encourage the development and adoption of new innovative technologies.