

THAI NEWS UPDATE: 14 MARCH 2022

1. Newly opened Betong airport spurs high hopes for tourism

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

Betong airport in Yala officially opens on 14 March, raising hope it will revitalise tourism and the economy in the country's southernmost district. The airport received an operating licence from the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) on Jan 28, said Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob. It is the 29th airport to come under Department of Airports (DOA) supervision. The air link to Betong provides a safe and convenient alternative to road travel which cut through mountainous terrain, observers say. The 920-rai airport is capable of handling up to 300 passengers an hour or 800,000 a year, according to Mr Saksayam. Owned and operated by the DOA, the new airport is about 13 kilometres east of downtown Betong.

2. Nok Air preps more routes

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

Nok Air is planning to operate more inter-provincial routes, starting with Nakhon Ratchasima-Chiang Mai, as well as resume international flights to Vietnam by mid-2022. Nok Air chief executive Wutthiphum Jurangkool said the airline is studying opportunities for cross-regional flights, particularly at the abandoned Nakhon Ratchasima airport and the new Betong airport in southern Yala province, to facilitate travel and create more economic activities. Without air transport, people have to spend five hours travelling from Hat Yai to Betong by road. People from the provinces without direct flights to their destination also have to wait for 2-3 hours for transit flights at Don Mueang airport. The Nakhon Ratchasima-Chiang Mai route may initially start with 2-3 flights per week, with tickets priced at less than 2,000 baht, he said. The airline is also planning a route from Nakhon Ratchasima to Phuket and Hat Yai based on seasonal demand, as well as a connection between Hat Yai with Betong.

3. Perks for 7 EEC zones to be introduced soon

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

Details of special incentives for seven economic zones in the government's flagship Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) are scheduled to be announced over the next few days. Kanit Sangsubhan, secretary-general to the EEC Office, said interested investors will be allowed to apply immediately after the incentives are announced. According to Mr Kanit, the special incentives his office is going to offer to investment projects in the seven economic zones are similar to the Board of Investment's (BoI) privileges, but one major difference is the EEC

Office will offer them to groups of companies or clusters of industries, while the BoI offers its incentives to individual companies.

4. Thailand confirms LPG hike as govt scrambles to soften impact of soaring energy prices

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

Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha has ordered government agencies to find ways of softening impacts on the public of soaring energy prices and present them at Tuesday's Cabinet meeting. The move comes after Prayut met for talks with Energy Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow and economic advisers on Friday afternoon, said government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana. However, the government will cap the price of diesel at Bt30 until the end of May. The price of a barrel of oil hit a 14-year high of US\$180 on Wednesday but had fallen back to around \$110 by Sunday (March 12). The PM also heard from economic advisers about progress on bilateral trade and investment with Saudi Arabia after relations between the two countries were restored in January. The Russia-Ukraine war has driven up energy prices, pressuring the retail price of oil and LPG and threatening to deepen Thailand's inflation woes. After meeting with the PM, Supattanapong said the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) will be raised by 1 baht per kilogram for a 15kg canister from April 1.

5. Roadshow aims to attract Saudi tourists after thawing of relations

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

Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn is to lead a roadshow to Saudi Arabia this month to explore opportunities to attract more visitors from the Middle Eastern country. The ministry is one of the key players moving in to exploit the normalisation of diplomatic ties between the two countries. After 32 years of strained relations, Saudi Arabian Airlines re-established a direct route between Saudi Arabia and Bangkok with the launch of a service to Bangkok from Jeddah via Riyadh on Feb 28. Mr Phiphat said that 72 people arrived on the inaugural flight but arrivals on subsequent flights have been few and far between.