

Thai News Update: 14 September 2020

1. TAT says country ready to reopen

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

Thailand will have to tolerate the possibility of new coronavirus cases when it reopens its borders to international tourists, but the country can minimise the impact and avoid a bruising level of unemployment with risk management, says the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). After the country reported its first local transmission in 100 days last week, the TAT downgraded its 2020 estimates to 70 million domestic trips from 80 million, contributing 418 billion baht in revenue, a decrease of 61% from 2019. International arrivals remain unchanged at 6.7 million, the same forecast before the border closure, with revenue of 332 billion baht, down 65% from 2019.

2. Industry Ministry vows to speed up 4.0 strategy

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

Thailand needs to speed up its transition towards Industry 4.0 by building more digital infrastructure and drawing foreign investors considering relocating their production bases because of the Covid-19 crisis, says Industry Minister Suriya Jungrungreangkit. The pandemic not only forces people to follow a new lifestyle, but it also causes entrepreneurs to consider making changes to their factories in terms of geography and technology, he said. "The Covid-19 pandemic is stimulating uses of digital technology, making consumer behaviour change faster than expected," Mr Suriya said.

3. Budget Bureau announces delay in new budget disbursement

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

All government units have been told, by the Budget Bureau, that disbursement of funds from the 2021 fiscal year budget will be delayed until after October 1st, the first day of the new fiscal year. An urgent letter from Mr. Dechapiwat na Songkhla, director of the Budget Bureau, dated September 10th, which was circulated to all government units, said that the new budget could not be disbursed by October 1st and all government units were advised to make use of residual funds from the current fiscal year for necessary spending. The letter, however, stops short of specifying when the budget will be available for disbursement. The 3.3 trillion baht Budget Bill, for the 2021 fiscal year, has passed the first reading in the House of Representatives and the second and third readings are scheduled for September 16th to 18th, before being passed to the Senate for deliberations on September 22nd and 23rd.

4. Insurance firm SMK allocates Bt160m for digital transformation

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

Syn Mun Kong Insurance Pcl (SMK) has set aside a budget of Bt160 million for 2020-22 as part of its continued digital transformation to become a full "insurtech" organisation, chairman Reungvit Dusdeesurapot said. He added that the transformation would strengthen the company's competitiveness and ensure continued growth. Of the total budget, Bt45 million will be spent in the first year. The company has kept developing new digital insurance platforms to make it easier for customers to access its products and services, he said.

5. Cabinet reshuffle on the cards after sudden exit of newly appointed finance minister

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

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha is expected to reshuffle the Cabinet of his coalition government soon after Finance Minister Predee Daochai resigned on September 1 less than a month after his appointment, according to a source in the ruling Palang Pracharat Party. Predee, a former chairman of the Thai Bankers' Association, cited health reasons for his abrupt departure from the Finance Ministry, but some observers believe he had a conflict with his deputy over the annual promotion of senior officials at the ministry. A Palang Pracharat source said that Energy Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow, who is also deputy prime minister, is a candidate for finance minister.

6. Court okays THAI's rehabilitation plans

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

The bankruptcy court on Monday (September 14) gave the go-ahead to Thai Airways International (THAI)'s rehabilitation plan and choice of planner to implement it. As announced in the Royal Gazette earlier, THAI's creditors have about a month to file for the repayment of debts either online or at the airline's headquarters in Bangkok. The creditors will then be presented with the rehabilitation plan for approval before it goes to court for a final okay. This procedure will take another two to three months.

7. New stimulus package to boost spending power of low-income groups

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

The government will this week consider measures to increase the purchasing power of low-income groups and support small businesses. Lavaron Sansnit, the director-general of the Fiscal Policy Office, said on 13 September that the Finance Ministry would urge the government's centre for economic situation administration to approve the latest stimulus measures on Wednesday or Thursday. Earlier, the government had said that it planned to

spend Bt45 billion to boost consumption among grass roots people and support small businesses.