

## THAI NEWS UPDATE: 16 MARCH 2022

### **1. Asean economic ministers optimistic on upgrading pacts**

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

The Asean Economic Ministers (AEM) group wants to upgrade existing free trade agreements (FTAs) and accelerate the enforcement of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade pact among all members, aiming to revive the regional economy amid the Covid-19 crisis. According to Trade Negotiations Department director-general Auramon Supthaweethum, the economic ministers are expected to discuss restoring the Asean economy amid the pandemic and Asean strategies for economic relations with non-Asean countries at the 28th AEM Retreat, which is scheduled to take place today and tomorrow via video conference. "Cambodia, as chair of the Asean meeting, wants all Asean members to work together to start negotiations to upgrade the Asean Trade in Goods Agreement and existing FTAs, especially the Asean-Australia-New Zealand FTA, and accelerate the enforcement of RCEP for all members," she said.

### **2. Samui port study gets nod**

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

The Marine Department has decided to launch a study to determine the feasibility of constructing a cruise ship terminal on Koh Samui in Surat Thani province. In an attempt to gauge the private sector's interest in the proposed cruise ship terminal project, the department launched a seminar in Bangkok on Tuesday. The seminar, chaired by the director of the department's engineering division Wanchai Butthongdee, weighed the pros and cons of using a public-private partnership (PPP) model to fund the terminal's construction. Koh Samui was chosen as the location as it is often visited by transiting cruise ships due to its natural beauty. According to the ministry, the island was visited 59 times by cruise ships before the pandemic, making it the third busiest cruise stop-off in Thailand behind Phuket and Laem Chabang.

### **3. Thai Union launches biodiversity scheme**

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

Seafood producer Thai Union Group has teamed up with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) to further improve transparency in the company's supply chains and consider wider impacts on biodiversity. The agreement with SFP, which is dedicated to delivering healthy marine and aquatic ecosystems as well as a secure seafood supply through the creation of a responsible seafood economy, will allow ongoing audits of Thai Union's

supply chains. Thai Union remains engaged at SFP roundtables critical to the company's supply chains.

#### **4. PM orders measures to reduce people's financial burden**

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

Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha has ordered relevant agencies to draw up measures to help reduce people's cost of living amid increasing energy prices due to the Russia-Ukraine war, government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana said on Tuesday. The government will announce short- and long-term measures soon," he added. On Tuesday afternoon, the PM met with representatives from the Energy, Finance, Labour, Commerce, Agriculture and Cooperatives ministries, as well as the Bank of Thailand, the Fiscal Policy Office and the National Economic and Social Development Council to discuss suitable measures to help people affected by the energy price crisis, especially low-income earners and labourers.

#### **5. Workers from three neighbouring countries to be allowed to renew work permits**

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

The Cabinet approved the extension of work permits for Cambodians, Laotians and people from Myanmar for two more years, Government spokesperson Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana said on 15 March. Thanakorn said the Cabinet signed a memorandum of understanding on labour cooperation under an employment agreement. It will allow Cambodians, Laotians and people from Myanmar who have worked in Thailand for more than four years to apply for a work permit extension of up to two years. The approval aims at solving the problem of travel for foreign workers in the present Covid-19 situation. It will also respond to demand for foreign workers so the business and economic sectors can move forward, he pointed out.