

Thai News Update: 17 August 2020

1. Cabinet to consider RCEP pact in October

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

The Commerce Ministry will ask the cabinet for approval to sign the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in October, one month ahead of the pact's official scheduled signing in Vietnam. Ronnarong Phoolpipat, the Commerce Ministry's chief inspector-general, said last week that the signatory countries have completed their scrubbing of the legal text for all 20 chapters of the pact. "Our goal is to complete all the talks within August, submit the proposal for the cabinet's approval in October and have an official signing in November at the Asean Summit in Vietnam," said Mr Ronnarong, also the chief negotiator of the RCEP for Thailand.

2. Thailand ranked world's safest tourist destination amid Covid-19

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

Thailand was ranked the safest destination in the world to visit during the Covid-19 pandemic. The country topped the list because of its high International Health Regulations score of 85 per cent, moderate population density and very low number of Covid-19 cases. Malaysia's Malay Mail news agency recently reported that a Berlin-based travel startup, Turlane, had carried out a study on August 10 to determine safe holiday destinations amid the outbreak. The company assembled data and analysed various metrics, including hours of sunshine per day for outdoor activities as well as the national 14-day notification rates of new Covid-19 cases published by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

3. Bank of Thailand seeks to lure more loan intermediaries

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

The Bank of Thailand is proposing an amendment to the Credit Information Business Act of 2002 to attract business operators to become intermediaries in providing loans. The move aims to reduce the risk and cost of the loan intermediary business, said a Finance Ministry source who requested anonymity. The loan intermediary business that operates peer-to-peer (P2P) lending under the Bank of Thailand's supervision and debt crowdfunding under the Securities and Exchange Commission's oversight are alternative sources of fundraising platforms for small and medium-sized enterprises. Many SMEs have difficulty accessing loans from traditional financial institutions, according to the source.

4. Thais opt for domestic tourism in the next 12 months: Agoda survey

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

A survey conducted recently by tourism platform Agoda showed that Thai people tended to travel within their country, and the top province to visit was Chiang Mai. The survey was conducted in numerous countries, under the campaign "GoLocal". The survey showed that people in Thailand, Indonesia, and the US had given priority to travelling domestically. The top three destinations Thai people wanted to visit the most were: Chiang Mai, Phuket and Hua Hin.

5. FTI to push renewable energy agenda with new minister

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

The Federation of Thai Industries (FTI) will meet new Energy Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow and present a white paper on renewable energy to promote production of renewable energy at community level. Suvit Toraninpanich, president of renewable energy industry group at the FTI, said: "The paper aims to limit the import of liquefied natural gas to an appropriate level and maximise the use of domestically produced energy, especially biomass and biogas energy from agricultural produce and solar energy under free market policies," he said.

6. EEC development 'not impacted' by Cabinet reshuffle

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

The recent Cabinet reshuffle will have no bearing on the development of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), the Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce in Thailand (JFCCT) said. The promotion of the EEC was an important policy of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha. His Cabinet reshuffle changed some EEC executives, and Supattanapong Punmeechaow, the new deputy prime Minister and energy minister, was promoted to take an important role in the project.

7. Thailand's GDP contracts 12.2 per cent in second quarter under impact of Covid-19

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

The Thai economy shrank by 12.2 per cent in the second quarter year on year, the National Economic and Social Development Council said on 17 August. The GDP contraction was largely due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and every country had suffered a downturn except China and Vietnam, which grew 3.2 per cent and 0.4 per cent respectively. Most countries had imposed lockdown restrictions which affected economic activities, he said. Exports, production, private investment, consumption and tourism have been hard hit,

and only public spending played a key role in shoring up the economy from April to June, he said.