

## Thai News Update: 17 October 2019

### **1. Bangkok readies for Asean Summit**

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

Thailand is preparing to welcome the leaders of 10 Asean nations and their dialogue partners, including US President Donald Trump if he decides to come to the Asean Summit himself. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, South Korea's President Moon Jae-in and Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang, are among the leaders who will join the three-day summit starting on Nov 2, says Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai. But it is still uncertain whether President Trump will come in person for talks with other leaders, or send in a representative on his behalf. In the US, President Trump is dealing with battles on a variety of fronts, including impeachment hearings. As the current Asean chair, Thailand is looking forward to meeting its counterparts to talk on a range of issues and strengthen diplomatic ties, said the foreign minister.

### **2. Thailand near bottom of privacy protection table**

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

Thailand placed in the bottom five out of 47 countries ranked for privacy protection, according to a study by Comparitech, a website that researches and compares technology services. Thailand and Malaysia posted scores of 2.6 out of 5, trailed only by India (2.4), Russia (2.1) and China (1.8) in the first-time study, entitled "Surveillance States". Ireland ranked first with a score of 3.2, followed by Portugal, Norway, France and Denmark, all of which scored 3.1. Comparitech assessed privacy protection and the state of surveillance in 47 countries to determine which governments are failing to protect privacy.

### **3. Government and Opposition given 18 hours each to debate budget bill**

**Source: Thai PBS World ([Link](#))**

In addition to the 18 hours for government MPs, their chief whip Mr. Wirat Rattanaseth said that two additional hours are reserved for Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha for the presentation of the budget bill, while the smaller parties allied with the government will be given one hour. As agreed by both sides, the debate will end at midnight on both Thursday and Friday but, on

Saturday it will end by 9 pm, said Mr. Wirat. He explained that the extension of the debate from two to three days is to allow adequate time for Opposition MPs and those from smaller parties to speak. Finance Minister and leader of Palang Pracharat party, Uttama Savanayana, said today that Government MPs are ready to defend the budget, to clarify to the opposition and to accept suggestions or recommendations from all sides.

#### **4. Thai cabinet earmarks over 24 bln baht in subsidiaries for rubber farmers**

**Source: Vietnam Plus ([Link](#))**

Thai cabinet on October 15 approved a 24.278-billion-baht budget for the first phase of income-guarantee subsidy for rubber growers. The scheme aims to ensure 1.4 million rubber farmers of Thailand have a stable income for six months, starting from October until March next year. The scheme guarantees the price of premium grade rubber sheets at 60 baht per kilogramme, latex at 57 baht per kg and cup lumps at 23 baht per kg. The maximum guaranteed amount will not exceed 240 baht per kilo for each 1,600 sq.m per year, and will be limited to 40,000 sq.m per farmer. The scheme will only cover plantations that are at least seven years old.

#### **5. Central Pattana plans to invest B22bn by 2022**

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

Thailand's largest mall operator, Central Pattana Plc (CPN), said on 16 October it will invest 22 billion baht by 2022 in new projects and store renovations. The investment plans come despite a slowing local economy and will extend the company's retail reach further outside the capital just months after it announced the 36 billion baht Dusit Central Park project in Bangkok. Investments will be in three new projects outside of Bangkok in Ayutthaya, Si Racha district of Chon Buri and Chanthaburi, Chief Development Officer Chanavat Uahwatanasakul said in a statement. CPN, owned by the billionaire Chirathivat family, will also invest in two major re-developments of malls in Bangkok and renovations at 12 other locations, Deputy Chief Executive Officer Wallaya Chirathivat told reporters at a briefing.

#### **6. Bt6-bn funding for SME Bank recapitalisation**

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

The Cabinet on October 15 approved allocation of funds by Specialised Financial Institutions Development Fund, not exceeding Bt6 billion in total, to the Small and Medium Enterprise

Development Bank of Thailand (SME Bank) for its recapitalisation plan, according to deputy government spokeswoman Traisulee Traisoranakul. The fund's committee had earlier approved the allocation. SME Bank plans to provide up to Bt57 billion in loans a year, beginning 2020. The bank estimated that through its loan provision of around Bt57 billion a year, about 142,000 SMEs would have access to working capital till 2013 and generate at least 462,000 jobs annually.

### **7. Joint panel to push adoption of digital tech**

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

The Council of Digital Economy and Society, in a joint effort with the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI) and the Board of Trade of Thailand, will set up a working panel to help private companies adopt digital technology, said FTI chairman Supant Mongkolsuthree after meeting the council's chairman Suphachai Chearavanont on October 15. The panel will also facilitate the setup of data centres and usage of Big Data by private enterprises, Supant said, adding that there will be further discussions between the three partners. The working committee, Suphachai said, is expected to be fully set up this year. The council would work closely with the FTI to introduce digital technology to all industries, he added.

### **8. Rail land handover on track**

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

The Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) Office on 16 October insisted that land needed for the high-speed railway linking three airports will be handed over on time, after the CP Group-led consortium confirmed it will sign the contract on Oct 25 as scheduled. Kanit Sangsubhan, secretary-general of the EEC Office, gave the assurances as he unveiled a land delivery plan for the 224-billion-baht rail system linking the capital's Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi with U-Tapao airport in Rayong. The 220km high-speed railway is one of five ambitious infrastructure megaprojects that will serve the EEC. According to Mr Kanit, the delivery plan, approved by the EEC Policy Committee, is the first of its kind and will guarantee that land is handed over in time to the bid winner. Budgets to execute the plan are expected to be ready in November, he said.

## **9. SCB pioneers pay cheque advance scheme**

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

Siam Commercial Bank (SCB) has emerged as the country's first lender allowing its payroll clients to withdraw salary in advance through its mobile banking platform. The bank's payroll customers can withdraw money from their pay cheque before payday rolls around via the MeTang feature available from SCB Easy, for up to 50% of their salary but not exceeding 20,000 baht, said Orapong Thien-Ngern, co-president of the bank. Borrowers can only withdraw money they have already earned. For example, they can withdraw 3,333 baht from their pay cheque if they work five days and their monthly salary is 20,000 baht. The bank charges 20 baht for every 1,000 baht withdrawn using the pay cheque advance, and such fees are automatically paid from the employee's next salary.