

Thai News Update: 18 August 2020

1. Phuket tourism plan due on Oct 1

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

The Tourism and Sports Ministry aims to introduce its "Safe and Sealed" tourism plan in Phuket by Oct 1, while operators in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai are teaming up as a northern hub for long-stay travellers. Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn said the ministry will join a meeting with Public Health, Interior, Foreign and Transport ministries on Aug 27 about the plan to open the country to tourists from low-risk cities or provinces who seek an excursion to Thailand. After a plan is developed, the Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) must approve it before launching the scheme. Mr Phiphat said one possible solution is to provide 1-2 kilometres of beach area near state quarantine villas, such as in Patong, to let tourists step outside hotels and enjoy the beach during the 14-day quarantine.

2. Health minister seeking Bt600m for vaccine production

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

Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul will tomorrow (August 18) ask the Cabinet to approve a plan to collaborate on production of Covid-19 vaccines. Anutin said the budget for the plan was around Bt600 million, though Thailand was spending a total Bt3 billion on vaccine research and delivery. He said that the matter must be concluded quickly since countries were now capable of starting production, and Thailand still had a chance to secure rights to produce the vaccine.

3. New MoU with Laos likely to hike power purchase

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

Newly appointed Energy Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow is considering signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Laos to buy additional electricity within the limit of 3,000 megawatts. Ministry of Energy permanent secretary Kulit Sombatsiri said that the project will be a part of Thailand's Power Development Plan, which consists of alternative energy, energy conservation and natural gas management projects that had been previously approved by the Cabinet.

4. Minister promotes Songkhla's Khuan Khan Lao as tourist attraction

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

Deputy Interior Minister Nipon Bunyamanee said he plans to promote Khuan Khan Lao, a 116-metre high mountain in Songkhla's Na Mom district, as a top tourist attraction. The minister led his team on Saturday (August 15) to check up on the progress being made in the construction of infrastructure to make the mountaintop more accessible to tourists. Nipon said that since he presides over the Songkhla Provincial Administrative Organisation, he has allocated funds for the construction of a 3-kilometre-long road and viewpoint to facilitate travellers who want to enjoy the sea of fog and view of Songkhla city.

5. SME soft loan conditions may be relaxed for better access

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

The new economic team is preparing to amend the soft loan conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to enable greater loan access and sustain jobs. The government wants to work on problems in loan access in accordance with requests from SME operators, said Deputy Prime Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow after chairing Monday's meeting with Finance Ministry officials. Mr Supattanapong, who was brought on board in the recent cabinet reshuffle, did not detail which soft loan conditions would be tweaked. The Bank of Thailand talked with banks previously about recalibrating the scrutiny on loan applications to give SMEs easier access to funding after some complained they could not access it.

6. DTAC joins effort to push e-learning platform

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

Total Access Communication (DTAC), the country's third largest mobile operator by subscribers, has joined the Digital Economy Promotion Agency (Depa) and the Thai Media Fund in rolling out an e-learning platform to enhance digital literacy among youth. The move aims to turn youths susceptible to online abuse into agents promoting digital literacy among friends. The platform was introduced 17 August by Nuttapon Nimmanphatcharin, president of Depa; Thanakorn Srisuksai, manager of the Thai Media Fund; Marcus Adaktusson, chief corporate affairs officer of DTAC; and Srida Tanta-atipanit, manager of the Internet Foundation for the Development of Thailand.