

Thai News Update: 18 December 2020

1. Mini-FTA with Indian state set up

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

Thailand is scheduled to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to form deeper trade partners through a so-called "mini-FTA" with Telangana state in India next month. Speaking after a meeting 17 December with Indian companies, including members of the India-Thai Chamber of Commerce, India-Thailand Business Association, Thailand-India Business Council and related government agencies, Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit said the two sides agreed to expand cooperation on trade and investment, particularly on the state level.

2. New tax to promote EVs on the cards

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

The government and car companies are scheduled to meet next month to discuss a proposal to impose a higher excise tax on oil-powered vehicles as part of efforts to promote electric vehicles (EVs) and reduce air pollution. The tax hike was suggested because the current excise tax structure for cars is due to end in 2025, and there is interest in considering a more appropriate rate, according to media reports citing a Finance Ministry source. The source suggested the tax for internal combustion engines be the "highest" among car types to encourage people to shift to EVs. Atthawit Techawiboonwong, general manager for external and government affairs at Nissan Motor Thailand, said the government called his company to talk about the tax increase proposal, which may take effect in 2026 as part of a plan to help the EV industry.

3. Thailand eases curbs on travel

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

The government is easing travel restrictions for citizens from 56 countries to boost the country's pandemic-hit tourism industry, though visitors will be required to undergo a mandatory two-week hotel quarantine. Tourists from countries including Australia, France and the United States can travel without visas, but would need a certificate to show they are free of Covid-19 72 hours before travel and a booking at a quarantine hotel, Taweasilp Visanuyothin, spokesman for the Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), said. Visitors would then be subject to a two-week quarantine period after arriving, he said, adding the normal 30-day visa would be extended to 45 days.

4. Covid-19 micro-plan for holidays

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

The Office of the Insurance Commission (OIC) has partnered with insurance firms to launch a "new normal plus protection for accidents and Covid-19" plan as a micro-product for those concerned about risks related to the pandemic. As the pandemic continues to capture interest, regulators and insurers have launched the product as a marketing strategy to make insurance more relevant to people's daily lives, while helping to boost the industry. The new product is expected to increase sales during the pandemic, with insurance companies providing protection for a price of 10 baht during the New Year period from December to January 2021, said Suthiphon Taveechaiyagarn, the OIC secretary-general.

5. CCSA offers incentives like visa extension to make up for 14 days lost in quarantine

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

The Centre for the Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) announced on 17 December that some types of visa have been reactivated, the certificate of entry (CoE) validity extended and sports tournaments have been given the go-ahead. CCSA spokesperson Dr Taweessin Visanuyothin said that since December 1, the authorities have been conducting three Covid-19 tests on people under quarantine, instead of two. The previous set up was to test individuals between the third and fifth day and then again between the 11th and 13th day. Under the new system, visitors will be tested on the first day, then between the ninth and 10th day and then again on the 13th or 14th day.