

Thai News Update: 18 November 2019

1. Thailand ranks sixth on world's strongest health security list

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

Researchers from Johns Hopkins University have ranked Thailand sixth among a total of 195 countries with the world's strongest health security, Asia's No. 1 and the only developing country in the Top 10. Deputy Prime Minister/Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said that Johns Hopkins University researchers presented their research during a conference at the Office of the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the European Union in Brussels, Belgium on November 13, 2019. Thailand scored 73.2 out of 100 points. Thailand has been recognized as having the highest level of preparedness to cope with epidemics among 13 countries.

2. US firms flock to BoI amid trade war

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

More US investors are keen to relocate their production bases to Thailand and Asean to stave off the impact of the prolonged US-China trade rift. Kobsak Pootrakool, deputy secretary-general to the prime minister on political affairs, said executives from many US firms have sought a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak and the Board of Investment (BoI) over the past several months to solicit assistance from the government to facilitate their relocation attempts. Mr Somkid has already assigned the BoI with designing relocation investment packages to fit their needs, Mr Kobsak said. "The government's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) initiative and new investment policies to promote high technology, R&D, innovation, headquarters and human resource development have made Thailand more enticing to foreign investment," he said.

3. Thai economic growth remains fragile as GDP expands just 2.4 per cent

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

The National Economic and Social Development Council on November 18 reported that gross domestic product expanded by 2.4 per cent, in the third quarter of 2019 compared to a rise of 2.3 per cent in the second quarter, driven mainly by increases in private and government final

consumption expenditure and investment. Exports and imports of goods, however, continued to contracted. The state think-tank said that on the production side, the agricultural sector increased by 1.5 per cent in contrast to a fall of 1.3 per cent in 2019Q2 while the non-agricultural sector increased by 2.3 per cent, slowing down from a rise of 2.6 per cent in 2019Q2. The deceleration was the result of a 1.5 per cent fall in the manufacturing sector attributed to a drop of export-oriented industries and a slow-down in domestic demand.

4. China's medical apps eye Asean

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

China's largest online healthcare platform, Ping An Good Doctor, is setting its sights on Southeast Asian expansion to tap growing regional demand for healthcare services and cater to the increasing number of middle-class mainland Chinese who are travelling to the region for medical treatment. The platform, which already boasts 300 million users in mainland China, is eyeing a launch in Thailand or Indonesia to mark its entry into the region, which is home to 630 million people. To support this move, Ping An in August formed a joint venture with Grab to use the Singaporean ride-hailing and payment service's extensive network in eight Southeast Asian countries. The collaboration also marks Grab's first foray into the healthcare field.

5. Fresh talks set with USTR

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

Thailand is scheduled to have a new round of talks with the US Trade Representative (USTR) on Nov 20 about the US decision to end preferential trade privileges for a range of Thai exports. Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit said the Thai side will be led by Thailand's ambassador to the US, together with commercial and labour counsellors. On Oct 25, the US announced the removal of US\$1.3 billion (39.2 billion baht) in trade preferences for Thailand under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), effective April 25, 2020. The Commerce Ministry estimates that a higher import tariff of 4.5% on average will reduce US-bound exports by \$28.8-32.8 million next year, or 0.01% of overall exports.