

Thai News Update: 1 October 2020

1. Thailand tries to get Efta pact in place

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

Thailand has kick-started efforts to forge a free trade agreement (FTA) with the European Free Trade Association (Efta), a regional trade bloc consisting of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Auramon Supthaweethum, director-general of the Trade Negotiations Department, said on Wednesday after a seminar dubbed "Efta New Market in New Normal", the department hired the Institute of Future Studies for Development to study the benefits and impacts of a Thai-Efta FTA. Public hearings will be organised later to gather comments from all stakeholders, she said.

2. Thailand now open to long-stay tourists

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

The Government Gazette website announced that long-stay tourists would now be allowed to enter Thailand, after the Cabinet approved the measure on September 15. According to the gazette announcement, foreigners who intend to apply for a Special Tourist Visa (STV) should: Be a foreigner from a low-risk country wishing to stay for months in the kingdom under Public Health Ministry regulations.> Accept compliance of preventive measures as prescribed by the government, including submitting to alternative state quarantine in appointed hospitals/hotels for not less than 14 days and others. With the gazette announcement, the STV policy takes effect from October 1 until September 30, 2021.

3. Thailand eyes 50,000 foreign tourists in Q4, down 99.5%

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

Thailand is expected to have 50,000 foreign tourists in the fourth quarter of 2020, down 99.5% from a year earlier, an industry body said on 30 September, as the country tries to support its battered economy by gradually reopening to visitors. Foreign tourist receipts are seen at 4.5 billion baht in the quarter, down 99% year-on-year, Chairat Trirattanajarasporn, president of the Tourism Council of Thailand, told a briefing. The council predicts 6.74 million foreign tourists this year, down 83% from a year earlier, after a record 39.8 million visitors last year, he said. Next year's outlook remains uncertain, Mr Chairat said, although the official tourism agency predicts 20 million foreign tourist in 2021.

4. THAI to offer special flights to some destinations in October

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

Thai Airways (THAI) will be providing special flights to London, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Taipei and Hong Kong in October for people who wish to travel outside Thailand during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Bangkok-London flight TG916 will take off at 12.50am and arrive at 7.10pm (UK time) on October 4, 11, 18, while another flight to London will take off on October 25 at 1.20pm and arrive at 7.35pm local time. The Bangkok-Copenhagen flight TG950 will take off on October 4, 11 and 18 at 6.50am and arrive at 1.05pm (local time) and will take off at 6.50pm on October 25 to arrive at 12.35am (local time).

5. More stimulus measures in store to drive spending

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

The government looks set to introduce fresh stimulus measures, particularly aiming to spur spending by middle- and high-income earners and boost private investment. Deputy Prime Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow said the new measures will be based on the co-payment principle and include the features of the Taste-Shop-Spend scheme, which involves cash giveaways and cash rebates, or tax incentives to stimulate shopping, as previously introduced under the Shop Chuay Chart tax break. Details of the new measures, set to take effect in the fourth quarter, will be discussed at the meeting of the Center for Economic Situation Administration on Oct 7.

6. Prayut ready to listen to ideas from big businesses

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

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha will meet representatives of companies in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) on Thursday to learn about progress in their project development as well as listen to ideas on how the zone can be further developed. The meeting will take place at Laem Chabang, Energy Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow said. Present at the meeting will be representatives of some 16 major companies, including PTT, Amata Corporation, WHA Industrial Development and Mitsubishi Motors (Thailand). Also attending will be some ministers, including Supattanapong, Deputy PM and Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob, the government's spokesman Anucha Burapachaisri said.

7. Lower power bills to continue

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

The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has decided to continue charging medium-sized and large businesses based on their actual electricity usage for the three months to Dec 31 as a

relief measure, instead of applying the more expensive "minimum charge" rate. Under the minimum charge rate, businesses must pay at least 70% of their average electricity usage over the past 12 months despite low usage, in exchange for electricity supply reserved for factories around the clock. The rate is considered unsuitable during the coronavirus pandemic, when some businesses are temporarily closed as a result of measures to curb the outbreak. ERC secretary-general Khomgrich Tantravanich said the waiver of the minimum charge, which began in April, was due to end in September before the ERC extended it.

8. BoT predicts growth in upcoming Q2

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

Thailand's economy is expected to return to growth in the second quarter next year, supported by government stimulus measures and a low-base effect. The outlook assumes that government stimulus measures encourage public spending and the special tourist visa (STV) scheme propels recovery momentum and improves domestic consumption, said Don Nakornthab, senior director of the central bank's economic and policy department. Under the STV scheme, foreign visitors to Thailand are required to have a Covid-19 test taken 72 hours before departure, have a US\$100,000 (3-million-baht) insurance policy and sign a letter of consent agreeing to comply with the government's containment measures.