

## Thai News Update: 25 September 2019

### **1. Major Thai stores to stop giving out plastic bags by 2020: minister**

**Source: Reuters ([Link](#))**

Retailers and convenience stores in Thailand have pledged to stop giving plastic bags to customers from next year in a bid to reduce plastic waste, the country's environment minister said. Major operators will stop providing single-use plastic bags, starting January 2020, after signing up to a government program, Varawut Silpa-archa, the natural resources and environment minister, wrote on his Facebook page late on 23 September. Varawut said "43 department stores and convenience stores around the country have joined the program to stop handing out plastic bags", urging the public to use alternatives, such as cloth bags, for shopping. Companies in the program include CPALL Pcl, which operates more than 10,000 7-Eleven convenience stores in Thailand, and the country's largest retailer, Central Group.

### **2. Chinese exodus to Thai sites begins**

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

More Chinese manufacturers are looking to Thailand as a production base to avoid US tariffs, based on trends in demand for industrial estates here. WHA Corporation, the top provider of such estates in Thailand, said it expects Chinese companies to account for as much as half of its land sale contracts both this year and next, up from 12% in 2018. The firm also develops industrial parks in Vietnam. "People are moving some production," said David Nardone, the group executive for WHA's industrial development unit. "It will be a significant impact for Thailand and Vietnam. A drop of water for China can be a flood for us because of the different size of the economies." Thailand has rolled out incentives including tax breaks to woo manufacturers seeking to skirt the tariffs the US and China have imposed on each other. Recent evidence suggests rival Vietnam has pulled ahead in the race to lure producers.

### **3. Transport Ministry plans to introduce many new “big bike” rules and restrictions, including for foreigners**

**Source: The Pattaya News ([Link](#))**

The Transport Ministry plans to ban “lane splitting” by big-bike riders and limit their speed to 80 kilometres per hour in built-up areas for safety. Chirute Visalachitra, deputy permanent secretary for transport, said on 24 September that under the “lane-splitting” ban, big-bike riders would not be permitted to ride or pass between vehicles and would have to wait for traffic lights behind other vehicles in traffic lanes. They would be required to limit their speed at 80kph in urban and community areas, he said. In addition, the ministry would require big bike riders to undergo specially-designed tests before obtaining big bike driving licences. There would be special test fields for big bike riders and they would also undergo simulations of danger-prone situations to ensure they have a safety-first mindset, Mr Chirute said.

### **4. SE Asian nations weigh unified approach to regulating Big Tech**

**Source: Reuters ([Link](#))**

Southeast Asian governments are banding together to take on global tech giants on issues including “fake news” and taxation, marking a new stage in the region’s approach to the internet’s explosive growth. The stakes are high both for the governments, which are counting on the digital economy to drive growth and innovation amid domestic political tensions, and the companies, which view Southeast Asia’s social-media-loving population of 641 million as a key growth market. The new initiatives, which have not previously been reported, include an effort by Indonesia to join forces with Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines in demanding action from Google, Facebook and other companies on content regulation and tax policy.

### **5. PM Prayut reaffirms ASEAN’s active role in tackling climate change**

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

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha on 23 September said the 10 countries of ASEAN are committed to working with the international community to tackle the challenge of climate change. Addressing the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, Prayut said ASEAN is highly vulnerable to impacts of climate change since most of the population lives along low-lying coasts and river plains. The increased impacts of climate change have increasingly threatened the

region's economic and social progress. In this regard, he said ASEAN has strived to strengthen resilience by implementing both climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, and is committed to be actively involved in global climate action at various levels.

## **6. Govt gearing up for budget battle**

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

The government, which sits on a razor-thin majority, is struggling to secure votes for the crucial 2020 fiscal budget which will be tabled for deliberation in parliament on Oct 17. The coming year's budget bill requests 3.2 trillion baht, up 6.7% from 2019. A vote on the bill will be a major test of numerical strength between the Palang Pracharath Party (PPRP)-led coalition government, which currently has 251 MPs, and the opposition led by the Pheu Thai Party, which has 244. The government risks being forced to step down if it loses the vote. Rachada Dhnadirek, a deputy government spokeswoman, said that the cabinet on 24 September approved the budget bill which has undergone a public hearing process as stipulated by Section 77 of the constitution.

## **7. Port authority eyes expanding shipping routes from Ranong**

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

The Port Authority of Thailand is getting ready to study the plan to develop shipping routes linking Ranong port with countries in South and Southeast Asia. The move is to promote trade expansion between Thailand and other BIMSTEC nations, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Ranong governor Chatuphot Piyamputtra told Thansettakit newspaper that the port authorities have chosen three ports to connect with the Ranong port initially, namely Chittagong in Bangladesh, Chennai in India and Colombo in Sri Lanka. The state port authority will negotiate the possible link up and believes the routes will be ready for ships next year.

## **8. SET, SEC offer 'one-stop' service**

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

The Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) has joined with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in unveiling the new "One-Stop Service" project, an initiative that is part of SET's "Creating Partnership Platform to Drive Inclusive Growth" strategy to provide a full range

of services to listed firms and those interested in mobilizing funds and financial advisors. The end-to-end platform offers advice spanning fundraising to regulations quality development, in order to effectively facilitate convenience, and eliminate overlaps. SET President Pakorn Peetathawatchai added that with the support and cooperation from the SEC in driving the Thai capital market development, SET would prioritise working for the benefit of market participants