

Thai News Update: 26 August 2019

1. Four airlines allow fresh fruit packs on flights free of charge

Source: Pattaya Mail ([Link](#))

The Ministry of Commerce has arranged with four airlines to allow passengers to carry a maximum of 20 kilograms of fresh fruit on individual flights free of charge. The measure is intended to help reduce the surplus of fresh fruit currently being produced, and bolster prices in the domestic market. Deputy Prime Minister/Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit visited an assistance project for fruit growers at Surat Thani airport, following the conclusion of MOUs between the Ministry of Commerce and the airlines, namely Thai Smile, Bangkok Airways, Nok Air and Air Asia.

2. Thailand to roll out plastic bag-gobbling robots

Source: SGGP News Online ([Link](#))

Thailand's Department of Marine and Coastal Resources is developing an AI robot to trap debris before it reaches the sea so as to prevent loss of marine life to plastic bags. The robots are expected to be launched by the end of this year. The prototype robot was unveiled on August 22 at a meeting of hundreds of local partners who are collaborating to protect marine resources in 22 coastal provinces. According to Cholanat Yanaranop, president of SCG Chemicals, the robot was the brainchild of last year's "SCG-DMCR Litter Trap" project aimed at preventing discarded plastic bags entering the sea. Dubbed the SCG Smart Litter Trap 4.0, the prototype robot is 1.5 metres long and 1.2 metres high, and has the capacity to collect about five kilogrammes of plastic per trip.

3. Thailand mulls new packages for foreign investors hit by trade war

Source: Vietnam Plus ([Link](#))

The Thai Government has ordered the Board of Investment (BoI) to devise a relocation package for foreign investors wishing to shift from China to Thailand as a result of the US-China trade

dispute. Amid the ongoing US-China trade tension, the race to attract foreign investors among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is heating up, said Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak. Somkid explained that the new promotional packages need to be specially tailored to suit the specific needs of investors from different countries. Meanwhile, BoI Secretary General Duangjai Asawachintachit said the agency had set this year's investment target at 750 billion baht (24.5 billion USD), focusing on companies wishing to move their production bases from China to Thailand.

4. Standards upgrade coming for farm exports

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

The Cooperatives Promotion Department will next year impose two protocols for food standards on livestock and crop farmers to prepare them for production upgrades demanded by key importers including China. Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) will become mandatory, Director-general Phichet Wiriyapaha said on 23 August, noting that most large-scale retailers in China sell only products thus certified. Other policies Phichet unveiled for next year included storing agricultural produce at the department's 824 provincial and district offices for up to three years. Phichet said there are 8,097 cooperatives across the country, 4,547 of which are associated with agriculture involving 6.7 million people. Nearly 1,600 cooperatives buy or guarantee the quality of 5.5 tonnes of farm products each year.

5. Finance Ministry takes regional approach

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

Finance Minister Uttama Savanayana has instructed the ministry to tailor solutions for each portion of the country to solve poverty and income inequality. Each part of Thailand has different demands and types of priorities, so different development models should be used, he said during the annual symposium of the Fiscal Policy Office (FPO). Roads and water sources are greatly needed in some areas but not others, Mr Uttama said, and the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) model is not appropriate for all regions. Agriculture is suitable for the Northeast, while fruit farming fits well in the South. He also delegated the Finance Ministry, led by the

FPO, to set up working groups tasked with scanning for problems and coordinating with related parties to address problems in each area.

6. Energy minister ties up with PTT to lower energy costs

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

Energy Minister Sontirat Sontijirawong is collaborating with PTT Plc to find ways of reducing the cost of electricity for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The Energy Ministry is also working with the Finance Ministry on special measures for the low-income strata that will be implemented through the state welfare card. Under these measures, welfare card holders will be divided into two groups: disabled people who cannot work, and people employed as taxi drivers, motorcycle taxi drivers and chauffeurs. The first group will require a subsidy on electricity, while the second group will require a reduction in energy costs, he said. PTT Plc is currently helping the second group by reducing the price of natural gas for vehicles (NGV), he said.