

## Thai News Update: 27 August 2019

### **1. Finance Ministry plans e-commerce tax next year**

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

The Finance Ministry expects to introduce a value-added-tax on electronic businesses next year, aiming to collect between 3 billion to 4 billion baht a year, a ministry official said on 26 August, tapping a boom in e-commerce in the country. The tax is expected to seek parliamentary approval this year, Ekniti Nitithanprapas, director-general of the Revenue Department, told reporters, without elaborating. E-commerce is surging in Thailand where entrepreneurs sell products directly to customers via Facebook, Instagram and messaging apps like Japan's Line Corp. Driven by upgrades to mobile banking apps, sales via social media in Thailand more than doubled to 334.2 billion baht in 2017, according to the latest report from the country's Electronic Transaction Development Agency.

### **2. India-Thailand trade up 60% in 2 years: Will this continue?**

**Source: India Today ([Link](#))**

Trade relations between India and Thailand, the second-largest economy in the Southeast Asian economic group, ASEAN, has grown by leaps and bounds in the last two years. Latest statistics published by the Indian Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, shows that trade has been grown some 60 per cent since 2016. However, if the timeline is drawn back to 2014, the total growth is down to 44 per cent in 5 years or a less impressive CARG of 7.6 per cent. This can be attributed to trade decline in 2014 and 2015 due to the uncertainty following the 2014 imposition of martial law in Thailand and which just ended this year.

### **3. Transport Minister eyes AI to solve traffic jams on highways**

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

Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob has instructed the Expressway Authority of Thailand (EXAT) to address traffic congestion in front of toll booths to alleviate people's travel problems.

In the long run, the information will be linked with the Department of Land Transport and related agencies. At the Traffic Control Center, the Transport Minister delivered his policy and assigned high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Transport to seek a solution to the problem. The Transport Minister instructed the EXAT and the Inter – City Motorway Division to conduct tests and collect statistical data related to the operations of cash-based toll booths and Easy Pass booths. This will ensure that there are adequate personnel to cover all shifts. The long term plan is for an artificial intelligence (AI) system to be used to link the database with the Department of Land Transport, the Royal Thai Police and related agencies. Surveillance cameras will also be used to capture vehicles' license plates, and bills will then be delivered to motorists at the end of each month. The plan will improve traffic flow, while the AI system will be operational within a year.

#### **4. Thailand aims to be Southeast Asia's power-trading middleman**

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

Thailand is jump starting a decades-old plan to create a Southeast Asia electricity super-grid, and wants to be the power-trading hub at the centre of it. The nation is set to triple the amount of electricity from Laos that it resells to Malaysia, while encouraging infrastructure upgrades stretching from Cambodia to Myanmar necessary for cross-border power trading, said Wattanapong Kurovat, director general of the country's energy policy and planning office. The moves are part of Energy Minister Sontirat Sontijirawong's efforts to make Thailand's power system cleaner, cheaper and more efficient. The trade is simple, Mr Wattanapong said. Thailand would buy more electricity for its own national grid from Laos, which generates more than it needs from dams along the Mekong River and its tributaries. It would then have excess power in its own national grid that it could sell into Malaysia, Cambodia or Myanmar.

#### **5. Dusit to target millennials with ASAI branded hotel in Chinatown**

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

Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, has signed a long-term lease agreement with I Am Chinatown Co Ltd to develop and operate ASAI Bangkok Chinatown in the heart of the city's renowned Chinatown district. Slated to open early

next year, ASAI Bangkok Chinatown will be the first hotel to open under ASAI Hotels, Dusit's new affordable lifestyle brand for millennial-minded travellers, in a prime location adjacent to Yaowarat Road one of the world's most renowned street food destinations, according to 267 August press release. To further promote sustainable agriculture, the hotel has partnered with Akha Ama, a socially empowered enterprise growing coffee in northern Thailand, to source 100 per cent Arabica beans from the project.

## **6. Changes proposed for tourism and guiding act to speed up penalties**

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

The Tourism Department will propose amendments to the tourism business and tour guide act so that penalties could be swiftly imposed on violators, the department chief said. Thaweesak Wanitcharoen, director general of the Tourism Department, said on 26 August that his department is in the process of studying how to amend the Tourism Business and Tour Guide Act of BE 2551 to increase penalties. Thaweesak said the amendments would allow the authorities to more quickly punish tour guide and operators of tourism businesses through a three-step process of issuing a warning, suspending licences and revoking licenses. In the case of severe wrongdoing, the authorities may skip the two precedent steps and directly revoke licenses, Thaweesak said.