

Thai News Update: 31 October 2018

1. 4 EEC Projects Worth B470bn Get Nod

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

The cabinet has endorsed four infrastructure investment projects worth a combined 470 billion baht under the government's flagship Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) scheme. The projects were approved by the EEC Policy Committee on Oct 4 and endorsed at a mobile cabinet meeting on 30 October in the northern province. The approval came as some of the nation's economic engines including exports, tourism and industrial production, have shown signs of a slowdown. The number of foreign tourists is expected to drop by 1.5 million this year from an earlier estimate of 39.5 million after Chinese arrivals dropped for a third straight month in September, according to the Fiscal Policy Office.

2. BOT Expected To Hike Key Interest Rate

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

Standard Chartered Bank (Thailand) expects the Bank of Thailand (BOT) to start monetary policy normalisation and increase the interest rate by 25 basis points (bps) , from 1.50 per cent to 1.75 per cent, in November. However, due to current concerns about the pace of the baht's appreciation, Standard Chartered Bank expects no further rate hikes in December, the bank's economist, Tim Leelahaphan, said. On 30 October, the baht weakened to Bt33.30 to the US dollar, its lowest in eight weeks. "We expect the policy rate to end 2019 at 2.25 per cent with a 25bps hike each in the first and second half of 2019," Tim said at a press conference on 30 October.

3. Siam Piwat Upbeat As Opening Of Iconsiam Approaches

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

SIAM PIWAT, the operator of Siam Center, Siam Discovery, and Siam Paragon shopping centres, on 30 October announced its readiness for the official opening of Iconsiam - its Bt54-billion masterpiece mall designed to make Thailand a true shopping destination on the global map. Scheduled to open on November 9, the new shopping complex occupying 750,000 square metres in

gross floor area on a 55-rai plot alongside the Chao Phraya River on Charoen Nakhon Road, reflects the company's confidence in the economic potential of Thailand and a sustainable growth in the number of foreign tourists, especially quality travellers, into the country.

4. Nod For Bt631-Bn EEC, Water Projects

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

The Cabinet on 30 October approved a budget of Bt631 billion to develop five infrastructure projects on the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), and seven water management projects. Bt600 billion will be invested in developing five infrastructure projects in the EEC while Bt31.47 billion has been allocated for developing the country's water management system, Government Spokesman Phuttipong Punnakan said after the Cabinet meeting on 30 October. Prayut assigned the Industry Ministry and related agencies to drive the cluster's food and processed agricultural products for higher value-addition, while accelerating development of safe and organic agriculture.

5. New Target Needed On ASEAN Energy

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

Thailand's Energy Minister Siri Jirapongphan has asked the Department of Alternative Energy Development and Efficiency (DEDE) to conduct a study to revise the target for energy use under Asean Ministers on Energy Meetings (AMEM) after Asean countries reached the existing target sooner than planned in 2021. Siri said that a committee will study the new target for reduction of the energy intensity as committed at 20 per cent within 2021. All 10 Asean countries have reached the committed target earlier, lowering the energy intensity by 21.9 per cent in 2016, compared to the base year in 2005.

6. Unsafe Food Costing Billions In Productivity Losses

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

Unsafe food is costing low- and middle-income economies US\$10 billion (3.66 trillion baht) a year in lost productivity and medical costs, according to a study by the World Bank. A large portion of the damage could be avoided with preventive measures at all steps of the supply chain, from

farm to table. Increasing food safety would significantly contribute to achieving multiple UN Sustainable Development Goals relating to poverty, hunger and well-being.