

Thai News Update: 3 November 2020

1. Skies to open for worshippers

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

Thai Airways International (THAI) has launched a special flight for passengers who want to chant Buddhist mantras over 99 sacred sites in the kingdom on Nov 30. Wiwat Piyawiroj, executive vice president for THAI's commercial operations, said the special flight is part of a programme aimed at bolstering the tourism sector, which is in line with the government's policy. He revealed that "the new travel experience" is part of THAI's "Magical Flying Experience" campaign. Mr Wiwat said passengers will fly over the 99 holy sites in the capital and 31 provinces, including Chon Buri, Rayong, Surat Thani, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Nakhon Pathom, Suphan Buri, Ayutthaya, Phitsanulok, Sukhothai, Chaiyaphum and Nakhon Ratchasima, as they chant the mantras.

2. Cabinet to map out recovery for South

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

The mobile cabinet in Phuket will on 3 November consider rescue packages for southern businesses severely affected by Covid-19, including soft loans for airlines and other tourism-related companies. Finance Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith said the government would ask airlines to limit price increase to help stimulate domestic travel in exchange for soft loans. Airline operators had asked the Finance Ministry in August to approve a 24-billion-baht soft loan budget to help depleted businesses resume normal operations but the ministry did not reply at that time.

3. Supercharging an EV hub

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

The Thai government wants to consign the name "Detroit of the East" to history as it looks to diversify beyond conventional automobiles to build a regional electric vehicle (EV) hub. The most difficult part of this plan does not lie in the know-how of developing EVs as they are no longer a cutting-edge concept. The challenging part will be ensuring the supporting factors needed to drive the change are in place. EVs have become a considered choice for drivers in Europe, the US and China for several years. Europe last year saw promising growth in EV sales of 44% year-on-year. In 2019, China produced over 1.2 million EVs to serve the global market, and its producers act as original equipment manufacturers to other brands from many countries.

4. Govt to buy 400MW/year under waste-to-energy plan

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

Energy Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow highlighted the national blueprint to generate electricity from waste as the Cabinet toured Phuket on 3 November. Phuket is at the forefront of the ministry's renewable-energy plan to purchase up to 400 megawatts of waste-generated power per year from 2022. The holiday island has two waste incinerator plants – a 2.5MW municipal facility and a 12MW plant built by PJT Technology. The municipal plant is currently offline while approval is sought for the private sector to join its management.

5. Prayut and Cabinet check tourism preparations on Samui

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

PM Prayut Chan-o-cha led a Cabinet visit to the tourism hotspot of Koh Samui on 2 November, to check preparations for the return of foreign visitors. After landing at Koh Samui International Airport, the PM and his ministers inspected the Covid-19 screening checkpoints and told staff to be prepared for more tourist arrivals. Prayut and his Cabinet also visited the Sheraton Samui Resort Hotel in Bo Phut to check the Alternative Local State Quarantine (ALSQ) for foreign tourists.

6. GSB to launch mobile microloan service

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

The Government Savings Bank (GSB) plans to launch a microfinance service on its mobile banking app early next year, said president Vitai Ratanakorn. The service is designed to help individuals and small businesses gain easy access to loans and would help solve the loan-sharking problem, he added. GSB's mobile banking app MYMO currently has 8 million subscribers. The new service will link up with the bank's customer database to make lending decisions. Offered will be micro-loans of Bt10,000 to Bt20,000 per customer per year, rising to Bt50,000 in the future. The interest rate will be lower than offered by loan sharks.