

Thai News Update: 9 November 2020

1. State pushes for Phuket recovery

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

The government has pledged to accelerate its efforts to rehabilitate Phuket's tourism industry, which has been pounded by the pandemic on both its short-term and long-term goals. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha already ordered his advisory team, led by Thosaporn Sirisamphand, former secretary-general of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), to finalise the proposals put forward by the private sector to rebuild the tourism industry in Phuket.

2. Religious tourism takes a hit because of Covid-19 outbreak

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

Thais spend on average around Bt10.8 billion in religious travel per year, Pimchanok Vonkorpon, director-general of the Commerce Ministry's Trade Policy and Strategy Office, said. The office recently conducted a poll on Thai consumers' spending related to religious and sacred items. "Out of 7,904 respondents, 43.9 per cent said that they travelled less often to religious venues [temples, churches] compared to the previous year, mainly due to the Covid-19 outbreak," she said.

3. Building safe travel bubbles

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

People will be eagerly following the expected launch of the world's first travel bubble later this month, which will enable people who test negative for Covid-19 to travel between Hong Kong and Singapore on designated flights without having to go through quarantine. If successful, the initiative could help pave the way for reopening travel and tourism -- a vital economic driver for many countries, including Thailand -- while we wait for the development of an effective vaccine and better treatment for the coronavirus. Hong Kong is planning to extend similar travel bubble agreements to Thailand and nine other countries: Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Korea, Switzerland and Vietnam.

4. Ministry swaps trams for electric buses in Phuket

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

The Transport Ministry has done a U-turn, opting to replace the much-anticipated tram project with an electric bus system so it can save 10 billion baht. The Phuket tram line would have been a 41.7-kilometre light rail system and come with a 34.82-billion-baht budget. Transport

Minister Saksayam Chidchod said he ordered the State Railway of Thailand (STR) to review the project and come up with an affordable alternative. SRT had studied the project for several years and it had the approval of the local community and private sector, but it was no longer the best option, according to Mr Saksayam. The alternative is expected to be a bus rapid transit (BRT) system, similar to the one that serves commuters in Bangkok's Rama III Road. Phuket's BRT buses will run along the median strip on Phuket's roads, Mr Saksayam said, adding the project was expected to be submitted to the cabinet for approval by the end of this year.