

THAI NEWS UPDATE: 20 SEPTEMBER 2021

1. Operators eager for Oct 15 restart date

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

The tentative date to restart domestic tourism on Oct 15 is expected to lift sentiment and bolster the economy after travel activities have been frozen following a surge in Covid-19 cases for much of this year. Tourism operators are not anticipating a strong rebound in the fourth quarter, with the bulk of trips taken by state agencies, one of the segments least affected by the pandemic, said Thanapol Cheewarattanaporn, president of the Association of Domestic Travel (ADT). Domestic tourism figures peaked during the pandemic in November and December 2020, but only a few provinces have the health and safety measures in place to assure local travellers at this point in the pandemic, said Mr Thanapol. ADT plans to feature medical cannabis tour packages to top destinations in the Northeast, including Sakon Nakhon, Buri Ram, Khon Kaen, Nakhon Ratchasima and Udon Thani, as part of the upcoming Tour Teaw Thai scheme, a tour package subsidy sponsored by the government.

2. Mass testing campaign kicks off in Phuket

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

Phuket has begun mass Covid-19 testing in communities suspected to be the source of the high number of new cases. Kusak Kukiattikun, the Phuket chief health officer, said nine so-called comprehensive Covid-19 response (CCR) teams were on 19 September sent to search for infected people in target communities, in a three-day active case-finding operation using rapid antigen test kits (ATKs). As a result, the number of new cases is projected to surge during the operation, he said. Mr Kusak said the number of new cases of Covid-19 on the resort island has surged to well over 200 per day. This has caused alarm bells to ring among officials who fear a worsening of the Covid-19 outbreak situation.

3. New cigarette tax set to drive up price by 6-8 baht per pack

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

The Excise Department has proposed the new tobacco tax structure to Finance Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith and expects Cabinet approval in time for the tax to be implemented on October 1, said department director-general Lavaron Sangsnit on Monday. Since 2017, two tax rates have been imposed on cigarettes: 20 per cent for packs priced Bt60 or less, and 40 per cent for packs over Bt60. Many cigarette companies dropped their price to less than Bt60 to reduce the tax burden. The department has not yet said whether the new structure will be a single or double rate, only that the tax will be higher.

4. Hainan mini-FTA deepens China trade

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

The government is upbeat about trade prospects with China after partnerships were deepened via "mini-FTAs" signed with Hainan province in late August. Thai officials are eager to sign similar partnerships with other provinces in China to increase trade with the country. Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit said following the first free trade agreement with a Chinese province, the ministry plans to organise online business matching activities between Thailand and Hainan at the end of 2021. Next year the ministry plans to organise a trade fair exhibiting world-class Thai brands at the Hainan Expo for the second year in a row, focusing on promoting health and wellness products and services such as Thai massage, spa, beauty products, herbal products and holistic health services.