

Thai News Update: 29 August 2018

1. ASEAN-Asia Pacific Trade Pact Talk Could Be 'Substantively Concluded' Soon: PM Lee **Source: The Nation ([Link](#))**

Talks on a major trade pact between Asean and six Asia-Pacific countries have reached a critical stage and could be "substantively concluded" soon, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said on Wednesday (Aug 29). Asean member states have been pushing for the trade deal, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), to be inked by the end of this year. It would create the world's largest trading bloc, covering a third of global gross domestic product. Aside from the 10 Asean member states, the signatories are China, India, Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand.

2. PM Opposes Plan For Higher Driving Licence Penalties **Source: The Nation ([Link](#))**

The Land Transport Department (LTD)'s plan to impose a much tougher penalty on driving-licence-related offenders has hit a major snag – opposition from Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha. "I disagree with the plan," General Prayut announced on 28 August. Emerging from a Cabinet meeting, Prayut said the department had not been given the green light yet, adding that further discussions were necessary to determine if the plan could go through.

3. Kbank Joins Rush To Tap Postal Network **Source: The Nation ([Link](#))**

Commercial banks are rushing to seek out business partnerships with Thailand Post Co to capture opportunities from the boom in online shopping. Kasikornbank (KBank) and Thailand Post Co, a state-owned enterprise, on August 28 sealed a business deal that saw one of the country's biggest banks appoint the postal operator as a banking agent. KBank became the first of the large banks to enter such an arrangement with Thailand Post. "We aim to service 250,000 online vendors across the country under this deal, which will allow them to send out their parcels and deposit money with Thailand Post's branches across the country," said Patchara Samalapa, KBank's president.

4. More Details On The New Rules Regarding Work Permits And Working In Thailand

Source: Thai Visa News ([Link](#))

Earlier this year it was revealed that Thailand had made major changes to the rules regarding work permits and its foreign labour law. The changes, which were introduced on March 27 2018 in the Emergency Decree on Non-Thais' Working Management (No.2) (2018) ("Decree No. 2"), saw Thailand relax some of its laws regarding work permits, including reducing the penalties for foreigners found working without work permits. For example, foreigners can no longer be sent to jail for working without a work permit. Also scrapped was the rarely enforced requirement that all foreigners who come to Thailand to attend meetings, seminars or sports competitions need a work permit.

5. Bank Of Thailand Governor Says No 'Imminent' Need To Hike Rates

Source: Business Times ([Link](#))

Thailand's central bank is under no immediate pressure to raise interest rates like emerging-market peers elsewhere given the nation's solid buffers and relatively strong currency, Governor Veerathai Santiprabhob said. The Bank of Thailand is monitoring economic developments closely, including risks to the growth outlook from trade protectionism, Mr Veerathai said in an interview with Bloomberg Television's Haslinda Amin on 29 August in Bangkok. While inflation returned to the 1 per cent to 4 per cent target range, it remains subdued, he said. Thailand's strong foreign-exchange buffers and current-account surplus have sheltered it from the worst of the emerging-market rout that's hit its neighbours. The baht has advanced 1.8 per cent against the dollar in the past month, the best performer among 22 emerging currencies tracked by Bloomberg.