

## Thai News Update: 31 October 2019

### **1. Last-minute India demands jeopardise Asian trade pact**

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

India keeps making last-minute requests after it agreed to terms for the world's largest regional trade agreement, potentially preventing Asian leaders from announcing a breakthrough next week on the 16-nation pact during a summit in Bangkok, people familiar with the situation said. In recent days, India angered other negotiators by making additional requests on the China-backed pact covering half the world's population, said the people, who asked not to be identified because the talks are private. Leaders had planned to announce a preliminary deal on Nov 4 when leaders gather for meetings hosted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, they said. Chief negotiators are still confident they can reach a broad agreement on the deal to reduce tariffs, known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), during a planned meeting on 31 October in Bangkok, the people said. Any announcement would pave the way for nations to finalise the details on the legal framework in the coming months.

### **2. Finance Ministry considering 3rd round of "Chim-Shop-Chai" scheme**

**Source: Thai PBS News ([Link](#))**

Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak has praised the "Chim-Shop-Chai" (Eat-Shop-Spend) scheme for its success in stimulating the grass roots economy and has instructed the Finance Ministry to consider launching a third round before the end of this year. While delivering the Government's Village Fund policy, at a meeting with officials from eight upper northern provinces today, the deputy prime minister in charge of economic affairs fiercely defended the scheme, saying that it is not a wasteful and populist policy, as charged by critics. He insisted that the program has been successful in promoting domestic tourism by incentivising people to travel and spend, adding that the scheme was never intended to benefit big business. The deputy prime minister said he would like the Finance Ministry to assess the results of the first and second rounds of the scheme, and then consider the possibility of launching a third round this year.

### **3. Thailand hopes new Mae Sot bridge will boost trade with Myanmar**

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

Thailand is counting on a new bridge connecting with Myanmar to increase border trade between the two countries. Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob said after opening the second Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge that the new link between Mae Sot district and Myanmar's Myawaddy will increase border trade to 100 billion baht per year from the current level of 78 billion baht. Mr Saksayam and Myanmar Construction Minister Han Zaw chaired the ceremony at the border between their countries. The new bridge has been built to ease traffic jams at the old bridge. The Mae Sot checkpoint is a major gateway for border trade between Thailand and Myanmar. Border trade between the countries accounted for 190 billion baht in the 2018 fiscal year, 78 billion of them through Mae Sot district.

### **4. 'Amazing Asean' is next chapter in tourism success story**

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

Tourism in Southeast Asia remains healthy despite the global economic slowdown, but this regional success story will only continue if Asean countries ramp up cooperation, experts say. Morragotwong Phumplab, assistant professor at Thammasat University's Faculty of Liberal Arts, said the tourism sector in every Asean country boasts unique qualities that lure international visitors to the region. But rather than collaborating on items such as joint Asean tour packages for top regional destinations, countries prefer to promote their own domestic attractions. Tourism in the region has been boosted by the growing spending power of China's middle class. Yet, China's rising geopolitical influence is also a key challenge for Asean, outweighing the effects of the global economic slump.

### **5. Thailand Post handling eight million parcels a day**

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

Thailand Post Co Ltd is promoting its EMS delivery service and encouraging customers to ship their goods in the afternoon so they arrive at their destinations the next morning. The firm said in a press release on Wednesday (October 30) that it handles more than eight million parcels a day and forecasts the total for 2019 to surpass three billion. Recent improvements at Thailand Post include Cash on Delivery (COD), Express Mail Service (EMS) and 24-hour-365-day service. President Smorn Terdthampiboon said the firm had remained committed this year to developing

its logistics and other services in terms of delivery, safety and speed, and responded to the growth of e-commerce.

## **6. Cabinet approves new labour law ensuring occupational safety**

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

According to a new law approved by the Cabinet on Tuesday (October 29), employers are required to arrange for their employees' health check-up and provide medical records for each employee from the time of employment. Somboon Trisrilanun, deputy director of the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, said the law will set new standards for occupational safety and health. The key requirement of this law is that employers arrange for health check-ups for employees hired for risky jobs within 30 days after employment. The employee will also be required to undergo a health check-up at least once a year.