



Siam Legal International Charts Thailand's Shift From Open Entry to Structured Enforcement

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Siam Legal International, a Thailand-based law firm for more than 22 years, has published a briefing examining a coordinated tightening of Thailand's entry, residency, and enforcement rules that took effect between August 28 and September 15, 2026. The changes span a unified deportation framework, revised Destination Thailand Visa filing requirements, and a shorter visa exemption period.

In 2024, Thailand extended its visa-exempt stay from 30 to 60 days for nationals of 93 countries as part of an effort to revive tourism. The measure achieved that objective, but it also allowed some visitors to cycle through repeated short-stay entries, in certain cases to live or work in the country without an appropriate long-term status. Beginning September 15, 2026, eligible nationalities returned to a 30-day exemption, with the option of applying for one extension of up to 30 additional days at an immigration office.

The Prime Minister's Office Regulation on Deportation B.E. 2569 took effect on August 28, 2026, one day after its publication in the Royal Gazette. It sets procedures for two groups of foreign nationals: those whose conduct is considered contrary to public order, good morals, or public welfare, and those who have completed sentences for specified offences. The listed offences include unlawful entry or stay, unlawful

employment, unlawful business operation under the Foreign Business Act, document forgery, and any offence carrying imprisonment of five years or more, together with principals, instigators, and supporters of those acts. Deportation orders may include a re-entry prohibition, and corrections officials must send information on qualifying inmates to the Interior Ministry at least 15 days before release.

The new regulation indicates that it primarily establishes faster procedures among government agencies rather than creating new grounds for removal. The update states that Thailand remains open to foreign nationals who enter lawfully for tourism, residence, employment, or business, with its stated concern directed at conduct that undermines public order or that involves entry and activity in breach of the law.

Since August 31, 2026, applicants for the Destination Thailand Visa must file only through the Thai e-Visa portal, and only with the embassy or consulate that serves their country of nationality, or, for applicants relying on residency elsewhere, the country where they hold proof of permanent legal residence. Applicants must also provide a criminal background check issued by that same jurisdiction. Existing holders are not affected by the change. Considered alongside the shorter exemption period, the requirement narrows the informal pathways that some long-stay visitors have previously relied upon.

The changes coincide with heightened attention to corporate structures in Thailand. A report published on September 17, 2026, stated that Thai authorities had identified approximately 2,200 companies suspected of holding land through foreign majority ownership, with investigations expected to conclude by the end of September. A proposal for an inbound tourist entry fee also remains under consideration as part of the broader policy environment.

The common thread across these measures is a move from discretion toward process, and individuals and businesses which have relied on informal arrangements will find that the margin for that approach has narrowed considerably," said Rex Baay, Senior Immigration Consultant and Operations Manager at Siam Legal International. Baay said the measures are consistent with the government's stated position that Thailand remains open to lawful tourism, residence, employment, and business. He added that the practical effect is to place greater weight on whether a person's immigration status and a company's ownership structure accurately reflect actual activity, and that periodic review of both has become a sound compliance practice.

A closer look at the amended exemption period, the deportation framework, and the revised application requirements is available through Siam Legal's Thailand immigration update, a commentary produced by the firm's legal team.

Siam Legal International is a Thailand-based law firm with more than 22 years of experience advising individuals, families, and corporations on immigration, corporate and commercial law, property transactions, and dispute resolution, with offices in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Pattaya. The firm advises clients on compliance and long-term planning as they navigate Thailand's evolving legal landscape.

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