Siam Legal International Assesses Risk-Based Entry Screening as Thailand Enters High Season

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Bangkok, Thailand - November 18, 2026 -
Siam Legal International, a full-service law firm with more than 22 years of experience, is examining Thailand's shift toward risk-based entry screening after the Immigration Bureau confirmed that 92 passengers of various nationalities were refused entry at Suvarnabhumi Airport on November 12, 2026. The Bureau said the refusals followed risk screening of arrivals, particularly travelers presenting themselves as tourists who could not clearly demonstrate their travel plans.

All 92 passengers have since been returned to their home countries. Officials stated that the same screening standard is applied to every nationality, and the Bureau has previously said that travelers holding the correct documents for their purpose of entry do not encounter difficulties at the immigration counter. The Bureau has reported more than 20,000 refusals of entry across 2025 as screening at the country's airports has been progressively strengthened.

The tighter checks follow an order from the Royal Thai Police directing all immigration checkpoints to strengthen the screening of foreign nationals seeking to enter and remain in Thailand. According to the Immigration Bureau, the screening targets individuals suspected of links to scam operations, money

laundering, and other transnational crime who attempt to enter the country as tourists.

For genuine visitors, the practical effect is that immigration officers are using their discretion more actively at the arrival counter. Officers at Thai checkpoints belong to the Royal Thai Police and may refuse entry under the Immigration Act B.E. 2522 (1979) to any foreign national who does not meet the conditions of entry. Officers may ask arriving passengers to show proof of onward or return travel, an accommodation booking, and evidence of sufficient funds for the stay. Travelers whose documents match their stated purpose of visit generally clear the counter without difficulty.

Siam Legal International views the development as a change in what is being assessed at the counter. Entry decisions increasingly turn on whether a traveler's overall pattern of travel is consistent with the purpose being claimed, rather than on a single set of documents. In the firm's experience, first-time visitors with a clear itinerary are rarely affected, while travelers who make repeated back-to-back entries under the visa exemption, or who effectively live in Thailand without a long-stay visa, are the most likely to face extended questioning. For long-term residents, the screening reinforces the value of holding a visa category that matches the actual purpose of the stay.

The screening update comes as Thailand enters its winter high season, two months after the 60-day visa exemption was replaced by a 30-day tourism-only scheme on September 15, 2026. Visitors entering under the new scheme are admitted for tourism only, and any form of work in Thailand requires the appropriate visa and work permit. The immigration team at Siam Legal International continues to track how these entry rules are applied in practice at Thailand's airports and land borders.

"Immigration officers are looking for a clear match between what a traveler says and what the traveler can show," said Rex Baay, Senior Immigration Consultant and Operations Manager at Siam Legal International. "A confirmed return ticket, a hotel booking, and a straightforward explanation of the purpose of the trip resolve most questions at the counter. Entry is always decided by the officer under Thai immigration law, so an offer of guaranteed clearance in exchange for a fee has no legal standing."

Travelers who plan to stay longer than their visa exemption allows, or whose purpose of visit goes beyond tourism, are advised to apply for the appropriate visa through the Thai e-Visa system before departure. Requirements vary by nationality, and the Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate in each traveler's home country remains the official source for current entry conditions.

Siam Legal International is a full-service law firm with more than 22 years of experience serving foreign and Thai clients, with offices in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Pattaya. The firm provides legal support

across immigration, property transactions, business law, family law, and litigation.

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