

Daily Thai News Updates: 10 April 2017

1. Eastern innovation districts planned to boost start-ups

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

The National Innovation Agency (NIA) and its partners are developing “innovation districts” in the Eastern region, expecting to generate 400 start-ups over the next three years and generate total economic value of Bt17.6 billion in five years. NIA director Pun-arj Chairatana said the agency would kick off the innovation districts this quarter in order to develop three areas of Chon Buri province – Bang Saen, Sri Racha and Pattaya – and Rayong’s Ban Chang district, the location of U-tapao International Airport. The new eastern innovation districts will provide the impetus for transformation of urban planning and develop the Internet of Things to provide quality service and improve the quality of life for people living in the areas, the NIA claims. The agency says it will provide human-centric engagement in order to win the endorsement of people in each area, encourage investment by both the private sector, such as land development, and the public sector in order to inspire people to create innovation and businesses in the smart districts. Moreover, the new innovation districts will support the development of start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises as well as create internationalisation in smart-city areas.

2. New public-private EEC arm to be formed

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

The Eastern Economic Corridor of Innovation (EECI), a joint project between PTT Plc and the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), was officially launched last week in Rayong's Wang Chan district. PTT president and chief executive Tevin Vongvanich said the oil and gas conglomerate has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the NSTDA for the feasibility study as well as the start of the design process and business model of the EECI, which is due to be located on 3,000 rai on PTT's Wangchan Valley. He said the project is the first one that has private firms working with state agencies for EEC development. Other projects to develop EEC are mostly state infrastructure investments, including a motorway extension from Chonburi to Rayong, the second runway for U-tapao airport, the third phase development of Laem Chabang deep seaport and the double-track railway.

3. Customs Act hope for business ranking

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

The government is hopeful that the new Customs Act will help improve the country's ease of doing business ranking by the World Bank, says Kan Trakulhoon, chairman of the Pracha Rat public-private collaborative initiative. Mr Kan said the public and private sectors have worked together for a year to amend and update the Customs Act to ensure it is up to international standards. The National Legislative Assembly approved the amended law on March 9 and it is expected to be sent to His Majesty the King for consideration within 20 days of the NLA's approval. Once approved and signed, it will be announced in the Royal Gazette and come into force within 180 days from the announcement date. The change in the Customs Act could shorten the time for clearance-audits or investigations, which are expected to be reduced from 10 to five years retroactively, indicating that potential initial claims and liabilities are likely to be reduced, according to Monrudee POhuttirodtaworn, the customs law and trade expert at PwC Thailand.

4. BoT chief rejects Trump's manipulation allegations

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

Bank of Thailand governor Veerathai Santiprabhob says there's no evidence that authorities have manipulated the baht to give exports an unfair advantage, responding to the US's decision to investigate Thailand for possible trade abuses. While the central bank intervenes in the foreign exchange market at times, the baht has been left to strengthen against the dollar this year relative to other regional peers, proving that there was no intent to keep the currency weak, Mr Veerathai said in an interview with Bloomberg Television's Haslinda Amin in Cebu, Philippines. "I don't think anyone has evidence that Thailand manipulated the currency to gain an unfair competitive advantage," the governor, 47, said on Thursday on the sidelines of a conference of regional finance ministers and central bank chiefs. "Thailand has not adopted any exchange rate policies to gain an unfair competitive advantage in trade." US President Donald Trump's executive order to probe 16 countries that run the largest bilateral trade deficits with the US poses a risk for export-dependent Thailand and complicates the central bank's currency policy.

5. PayPal reveals ambition for deeper footprint in Thailand

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

PayPal aims to be a “must choice” e-payment option in Thailand. The company recently set up a representative office and appointed its first country head for Thailand. Somwang Luangphaiboonsri, Paypal (Thailand)’s country head, said that his role is to take care of marketing of PayPal in Thailand. He said his mission is to expand PayPal so it reaches a lot more e-merchants in Thailand, across different business sizes and industries. The benefit of PayPal having a local office in Thailand, Somwang said, is it allows the company to pay closer attention to customers. “Actually, PayPal’s system is well designed and developed to serve every single need of online merchants. Just sign on and login, merchants can get PayPal as their payment method. But [many] Thais need a touchable service offered by humans,” said Somwang. Thailand is the third country where PayPal has set up a local office, following Singapore and Malaysia. In Southeast Asia, PayPal has a business footprint in six countries – the other three are Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam. “PayPal’s payment transactions in Thailand in the last couple of years were very active. The transactions on PayPal’s platform increased to double digits, which is the reason why we have to be here to be closer to take care of customers,” said Somwang.