

Daily Thai News Updates: 11 May 2017

1. Thailand 4.0 keys outlined

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

Value creation, development of IT professionals and software developers and updated laws are necessary components for the development of Thailand 4.0, say IT experts. "The development of Thailand 4.0 does not just involve the IT industry. It's related to every business and social stakeholder," Manoo Ordeedolchest, an IT industry guru, recently said at a seminar entitled: "Thailand 4.0, are we ready?" Companies need to improve their digital capacity to innovate their businesses, rather than just embrace it for the sake of creating value for their customers, he said. New regulations are needed to stimulate technological change to serve a rapidly changing world, said Mr Manoo. Kumpol Sontanarat, director for the organisational risk management and governance development department at the Securities and Exchange Commission said financial regulators should provide greater collaboration and support local fintech startups to help them innovate more products and services.

2. Sri Lanka FTA likely to face delay

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

Thailand is unlikely to be able to sign a free-trade agreement (FTA) with Sri Lanka this year as expected, according to a high-ranking state official. Boonyarit Kalayanamit, director-general of the Trade Negotiations Department, said the planned Thailand-Sri Lanka FTA is still being studied and is likely be completed in July. "We expect the two dialogue partners to open talks late this year, starting with the liberalisation of trade in goods," he said. On Feb 17, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak, who met Malik Samarawickrama, Sri Lanka's Development Strategies and International Trade Minister, said the two countries aimed to sign an FTA later this year to triple bilateral trade to US\$ 1.5 billion (52.5 billion baht) over the next five years. Mr Somkid also proposed that Thailand and Sri Lanka conduct parallel strategic cooperation in certain areas in order to expedite mutual economic benefit for the two countries, as FTAs require time for the two countries, as FTAs require time for negotiations. The cooperation is set to be conducted both on a

government-to-government and private-to-private basis. The sectors in which Sri Lanka is eager to attract Thai investment include jewellery, electronics, consumer products and industrial estates.

3. Three EEC projects to be proposed

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

A working group on the Eastern Economic Corridor set up by the Cabinet plans to propose to the EEC Committee at the end of this month that it open opportunities for the private sector to join in the development of three infrastructure projects worth a total of Bt446 billion. They are a project at U-tapao International Airport worth Bt200 billion, Laem Chabang Port Phase 3 worth Bt88 billion, and a high-speed railway from Bangkok to Rayong worth Bt158 billion. Kobsak Pootrakool, vice minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, said that according to the proposal, private companies would be invited to participate in the three projects under the Public-Private Partnership Eastern Economic Corridor Fast-Track agreement. The PPP EEC Fast Track arrangement aims to speed up the tendering process from the opening of bidding through approval of the projects for construction. Normally such PPP projects take 24 months to process, but the fast-tracking should reduce that to between eight and 10 months. Kobsak said the fast-tracking would not cut corners on such things as Environmental Impact Assessments but would reduce duplication in work procedures.

4. Analysts see slight bump in Q1 growth

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

Thai GDP possibly grew at a marginally faster rate from January to March than in the previous quarter as state investment and private consumption underpinned recovery momentum despite private investment remaining tepid, economists say. "The Thai economy is expected to have grown by 3.3% year-on-year in the first quarter, up from 3% growth recorded in the fourth quarter of last year," said Naris Sathapholdeja, senior vice-president of TMB Analytics, an economic analysis unit of TMB Bank. "The better annual growth rate was supported by solid government investment and stronger-than-expected private consumption." The National Economic and Social Development Board is due to announce the first-quarter reading on May 15. TMB Analytics estimates 3% quarter-on-quarter GDP growth in the first quarter. That estimate is based on the assumption that public investment expanded robustly at 16% during the three months to March,

compared with 9% growth in the fourth quarter. Mr Naris said the research house also expects private consumption growth of 3% in the first quarter, supported by a recovery in farm income and strong spending on services.

5. Taiwan sees Thai fit with technology drive

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

Taiwan has been leveraging its information and computer technology to promote the biomedical industry and the island's leader sees parallels with Thailand's push to develop its healthcare industry along with other advanced industry fields. While Taiwan's initiatives are expected to deliver results soon as it lures overseas talent to support its industries, Thailand's projects under its technology vision are still mostly on the drawing board. "The Thai government has undergone restructuring by launching the Thailand 4.0 policy to develop high-value innovative industries, such as agriculture and biotechnology, medical care and smart electronics," Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen told The Nation during an interview to a group of reporters from Asean countries and India in Taipei last week. "These industries are similar to those of Taiwan's. So there is a lot of room for cooperation between the two countries, such as technology transfer and exchanging research and development experiences." Taiwan achieved notable success in developing its economy, starting out somewhat earlier than Thailand in the 1950s. Thailand's first economic and social development plan was launched in the 1960s. Taiwan's gross domestic product is about US\$519 billion (Bt18 trillion), compared with Thailand's \$390 billion.

6. OVEC opens more aircraft tech centres

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

The Office of the Vocational Education Commission (Ovec) has expanded its aircraft maintenance training centres from two to six locations to catch up with the growing demand for aircraft maintenance technicians in Thailand. Ovec's deputy secretary-general Wanich Oumsri said Ovec has recently opened four more aircraft maintenance training centres in Samut Prakan, Bangkok, Ubon Ratchathani and Khon Kaen. The two older centres are based in Phuket and Chon Buri. He said the expansion is aimed at producing more airline professionals to ease the shortage of skilled workers in the growing industry. "Earlier, Thailand Thailand had the capacity to train

less than 100 aircraft maintenance technicians a year. But with the four new training centres, the number produced by OVEC can be raised to 180 per year,” he said.