

Daily Thai News Updates: 16 March 2017

1. DEPA chief outlines 20-year roadmap

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

The new chief of the Digital Economy Promotion Agency (Depa) has outlined a 20-year roadmap for driving innovation and new technologies as part of the agency's efforts to push Thailand into the 4.0 era. Formerly known as Sipa, Depa will be a key of the Digital Economy Promotion and Society (DE) Ministry to use digital technologies to transform the economy and society, said Nuttaporn Nimmanphatcharin, Dapa's newly-appointed president. "We aim to increase income per capita to US\$ 12,000 per year in the next two decades, up from the current US\$ 5,000," he said. Depa is restructuring its organization to keep up with the digital era, with the process scheduled for completion by July 23, 180 days after the agency's establishment.

2. State keen to fast-track EEC PPP projects

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

The Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) Office is expected to set up a new subcommittee to seek ways to shorten to three months the public-private partnership (PPP) process for EEC infrastructure projects to begin construction. A PPP fast track normally shortens the study period before construction starts from 18 months to nine, but the subcommittee's mission is to cut it to just three months. Kanit Sangsubhan, secretary-general of the EEC Office, said the subcommittee will conduct a study of the possibility of shortening the process because the government wants the infrastructure projects to begin as soon as possible. "The order for the subcommittee was signed by Industry Minister Uttama Savanayana on Tuesday after a meeting of ministers and senior officials discussed ways to accelerate the EEC project," Mr Kanit said.

3. Mexico offers zero tariff for rice import

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

Thailand is expected to export 10,000 tonnes of long-grain white rice to Mexico soon after receiving a free import tariff quota from the Mexican government, says Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn. Mrs Apiradi said Mexico recently allowed zero tariff for 150,000 tonnes of imported long-grain white rice from March 2 to Dec 31 this year, as its government seeks to lower the country's food costs and meet higher demand. Apart from Thailand, the Mexico has also granted the zero tariff for long-grain white rice to Argentina, India, Italy, Uruguay, Vietnam and the US. The country's import tariff for rice is normally set at 20%. Under the combined 150,000 tonnes this year, the Mexican government has set a maximum 10,000 tonnes per company to get free import tariff.

4. Thailand in world top 10 for long term tourism growth, WTTC reports

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

Thailand's travel and tourism sector grew by nearly 11 per cent in 2016 and will be the world's 10th fastest growing country over the next decade at 6.5 per cent per annum, a new report by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) shows. Travel and tourism contributed Bt2.9 trillion to Thailand's gross domestic product, which was 20.6 per cent of total GDP in 2016. Additionally the sector supported over 15 per cent of total employment, which was 5.7 million jobs. The report further showed that visitor exports, which is money spent by foreign visitors in the country, grew by 13 per cent, generating Bt1.9 trillion, 19.2 per cent of total exports in 2016. Investment in Thailand's travel and tourism sector totalled Bt245.5 billion in 2016, accounting for 7.1 per cent of all investment in the country. This investment served not only to boost inbound figures, but Thailand's outbound expenditure grew by 10.7 per cent, showing that Thailand is not only an attractive destination in itself but that its citizens are increasingly exploring internationally as well. Over 2017, the sector's total contribution to GDP is forecast to grow by 6.9 per cent and to rise by 6.5 per cent per year over the next decade to Bt5.9 trillion, which would represent nearly a third of the country's GDP.

5. Prudence urged for 4.0 shift

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

Small and medium manufacturers have been encouraged to take inventory of their strengths before upgrading production technology to embrace the government's Industry 4.0 scheme. The push for Industry 4.0 is good for industrial development but a majority of small and medium-sized producers that are suppliers to big companies are not ready to comply with the new manufacturing standards, said Sanchai Noombunnam, deputy managing director of UBM Asia Thailand Co, a machinery fair organiser. Most of the suppliers are excited about the Industry 4.0 but they do not really understand it. "With the advent of Industry 4.0, they should not be in a rush to buy new, advanced manufacturing technology because it may not suit their capabilities and factories, making them unnecessarily waste a lot of money," said Mr Sanchai. The world is experiencing a major upheaval brought on by the fourth industrial revolution, and Thailand cannot help but embrace major changes on all fronts, he said. This has led the Thai government to impose the Thailand 4.0 scheme with Industry 4.0 being a part of it.

