

## Daily Thai News Summary: 10 November 2015

### 1. Thailand, Russia seeking closer ties

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

The Thai and Russian business councils have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to work together on an action plan to boost trade and investment between the two countries, says the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI).

The MoU is a commitment between the FTI's Thai-Russia Business Council (TRBC) and the private Russian-Thai Business Council, which agreed to create closer economic cooperation in the future. TRBC Chairman Kriengkrai Thiennukul said under the cooperation, the two countries would start with business matching road shows and trade exhibitions. Business matching will enhance Russian investment in Thailand, while exhibitions will help to promote Russian technology that can be transferred to Thailand with further investment, he said.

Russia is one of Thailand's major trading partners, with trade value between the two averaging US\$4.89 billion annually over the past five years. Top Thai exports to Russia are auto parts, jewellery, plastic beads and canned foods, while Russia's major exports to Thailand are crude oil, steel, fertiliser, gemstones and metal.

### 2. Government to build cheap housing in Bangkok

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

The government will earmark almost 100 billion baht to build more than 100,000 low-priced housing units for low-income families in the next three years. Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon said Monday the government wants low-income earners to be able to afford their own homes, and the project would give them the chance to do so.

The first project under the scheme will be developed in Bangkok's Din Daeng district in the middle of next year, with similar projects in other provinces later, he added. The housing scheme was discussed during a meeting chaired by Gen Prawit at Government House. The meeting concerned construction and finances. The meeting was also attended by officials of several state agencies including the Interior Ministry, the Social Development and Human Security Ministry, the Finance Ministry and the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry.

### **3. PM to focus on trade pacts at Apec meet**

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

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha will next week travel to the Philippines to lead the Thai delegation at the 23rd Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit (Apec) to push for the progression of free-trade agreements among Apec countries. To make up for Thailand's absence from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), he will also push for other bilateral FTAs between Asean and Apec member states to ensure the growth of Thailand and Asean. The 23rd Apec summit will take place on November 18-19 in Manila.

Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn said Prayut and other Apec leaders will push for the finalisation of FTAAP negotiations that began in 2007 to ensure trade and economic growth in the region, which will combine more than half of the global gross domestic product and larger than the TPP. The 21 Apec economies have already discussed many issues such as trade in goods, services and investment, which will be combined in many free-trade agreements between Asean and other trading partners.

Last month, 12 countries in the Asia Pacific region, including the United States and four Asean countries, signed the TPP, which ranks as the biggest trade agreement in history. Signatory countries account for 40 per cent of total global output. Thailand has not yet been included in the pact. During the Manila summit, Apec members will also study the impact and benefits of other FTAs as a pattern for the future FTAAP, the framework of which should be wrapped up next year. When implemented, it will ensure that the FTAAP becomes the world's largest trading bloc, said the minister. To move ahead with the FTAAP, Thailand needs to develop its industrial sector, and amend and adjust laws and regulations for market liberalisation among APEC countries, Apiradi said.

### **4. Telecom Committee to decide on CAT upgrade**

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

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission's telecom committee is expected to allow CAT Telecom to use its idle 20MHz of the 1,800-megahertz spectrum until 2018, when its concession granted to Total Access Communication (DTAC) expires. CAT has asked the committee to allow it to upgrade this 20MHz of bandwidth to fourth-generation technology. But the state agency did not specify how long it wanted to use the band. Earlier it said it wanted to use it until 2025.

Virapan Pulges, managing director of TICON Industrial Connection, the country's leading rental factory and warehouse developer, revealed that the company recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Japan's Seibu Cooperative Bank over helping and facilitating work for Japanese small and medium enterprises (SMEs) interested in investing in

Thailand. *"Many investors are interested in Thailand as a manufacturing hub and a pathway to high-potential Asean markets. This year, TICON met Japanese investors from over 120 firms under this programme, and we will soon organise a roadshow for them to visit TICON's ready built factories in 18 main industrial estates/parks. Many of these are situated in strategic areas within the vicinity of Bangkok and surrounded by other estates housing automobile and electronics factories,"* he said.

## **5. Honda to construct BT 1.7bn test course in Prachin Buri**

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

HONDA R&D Asia Pacific has announced that it will construct an automobile test course at the Rojana Industrial Park in Prachin Buri with an investment of Bt1.7 billion. The move aims to reinforce Honda's research and development capabilities so it delivers very competitive products which suit customer needs and requirements in Asia and Oceania.

The test course will be used for overall vehicle tests to evaluate vehicles' quality and performances and will complement the company's current activities which include product planning, styling design, engineering design, material research, and quality control. The test course is scheduled to be completed in 2017. The new test course will be built on a site of more than 800,000 square meters with various test tracks. Honda's vehicles can be tested in various aspects on different kinds of tracks which simulate real road conditions and terrains in different parts of the world.

When completely constructed, it will become Honda's second automobile test course outside Japan. The other is at the US. The test course will also be used for other products such as motorcycles and power products. The announcement was made in conjunction with the foundation stone laying ceremony at the industrial park yesterday. The ceremony was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak, other Cabinet members, and Shiro Sadoshima, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Japan to Thailand.

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By Harsha Hazarika