

Daily Thai News Updates: 17 October 2016

1. Luxembourg offers 1 million euros grant to Mekong River Commission

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

THE government of Luxembourg has granted 1 million euros (about Bt39 million) to the Mekong River Commission (MRC) to support the implementation of its strategic work for the period of 2016-2020. Claude Jentgen, charge d'affaires of the Embassy of Luxembourg in Vientiane, the Development Cooperation Office for Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, and Pham Tuan Phan, chief executive officer of the MRC Secretariat, formally exchanged the signed grant agreement recently in Vientiane. This is the second grant to the MRC by this Western European country since 2011.

“Recognising the MRC’s pivotal role with regard to regional cooperation in the Mekong River Basin, Luxembourg has provided continued support to the commission since 2011, including to the Climate Change and Adaptation Initiative,” Jentgen said. “Indeed, many of the core challenges in the river basin, especially with regard to climate change and hydropower development, can only be addressed effectively and sustainably through informed cooperation among riparian countries, and the MRC provides competent and effective support to its member states to this end.” During the last strategic cycle of 2011-2015, Luxembourg’s contribution directly supported the implementation of the Climate Change and Adaptation Initiative and the MRC’s flagship study on sustainable management and development of the Mekong River, including the impact of mainstream hydropower projects.

2. Citibank in voice technology first

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

Citibank thailand is the first financial institution in the country to use voice biometrics, also known as vocal-recognition technology, to verify the identity of customers who speak to its officers by phone. The bank will not officially introduce the technology until next month, but it has tested it with its employees to ensure its accuracy, said Vira-anong Chiranakhorn Phutrakul, consumer business manager at Citibank Thailand. The bank has been granted approval from the Bank of Thailand to deploy voice biometrics after testing convinced the BOT that this technology was capable of preventing fraud. Thailand is the eighth market in which Citibank has introduced voice-biometrics authentication. Its banks in Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam have already implemented the technology. Vocal-recognition technology extracts personal voice patterns and verifies the speaker’s identity using just those inputs. In essence, it listens to a person’s voice and determines who that person is, according to Citibank. It is effective against fraud because it has the ability to extract an individual’s voiceprint and to use it to verify the speaker’s identity by comparing it with live speech.

3. 'Insuretech' start-up Roojai.com pioneers platform for auto-coverage

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

Roojai.com has become one of the country's first "insuretech" start-ups, providing an online auto-insurance platform. Kanthapat Nutapotipun, chief marketing officer of Roojai.com, said it offered a new option for vehicle owners to buy coverage at a competitive price any time and anywhere. "You buy the insurance policies on your mobile phone or desktop computer. " We offer full coverage by Krung Thai Panich Insurance Co, a unit of Krungthai Bank. You can do it yourself online in terms of choosing a tailor-made policy to suit your needs. "As an insurance tech start-up, our system takes just a few seconds to calculate the insurance premiums based on your inputs so that you can compare our prices with others' in the market.

4. E-trade system by year-end

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

The Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA), under the umbrella of the Digital Economy and Society Ministry, says it will implement an e-trade document system by year-end to promote exports via electronic channels. "We are positioning ourselves as a project management office responsible for e-commerce promotions and supporting policies," said ETDA executive director Surangkana Wayuparb. The ETDA will serve as a collaborating centre for e-commerce ecosystem development to boost the country's e-commerce transactions. Thailand's e-commerce market in the business-to-business, business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-government segments is expected to grow by 12.4% to 2.5 trillion baht in 2016. Mrs Surangkana said the ETDA will continue encouraging businesses to go online, as part of the government's digital economy push.

5. Zilingo eyes small vendors

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

Zilingo.com, a Singapore-based fashion and lifestyle marketplace, has established its online presence in Thailand to compete head-to-head with regional players like Zalora. The website wants to become a leading e-commerce player in Southeast Asia. "We project opportunity in the region's fashion and beauty market is worth US\$20 billion a year," said Ankiti Bose, chief executive and co-founder of Zilingo.com. "Thailand is the first market we expanded to because of the large number of small fashion vendors and many hyper-connected consumers." Ms Bose said Thailand's e-commerce market is quite large, especially the fashion and beauty

segment with 2,000 small enterprises selling apparel, accessories, bags, shoes and lifestyle products. Unlike other fashion marketplaces that focus on big brands, Zilingo.com hones in on the millions of small fashion vendors who contribute 60% of the country's overall retail sales.

By Nandini Malhotra

