

## Daily Thai News Updates: 18 October 2016

### 1. FWD eyes e-commerce start in 2017

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

FWD Life Insurance Thailand will launch an e-commerce platform next year to increase customer engagement, a fresh move aimed at achieving the goal of becoming the fifth-biggest Thai life insurer in terms of premiums and brand awareness within three years. The e-commerce platform has been launched in some of the countries where the Hong Kong-based FWD Life Insurance has a presence and it is growing rapidly, said Aman Kapoor, chief marketing officer of the Thai unit. When the company's online insurance business is launched in Thailand, customers will get reward points for taking out insurance policies through the e-commerce channel, Mr Kapoor said. Reward points can be redeemed for prizes but not for insurance premium discounts or cash. FWD's premiums grew rapidly in the first half of the year, thanks to a build-up of customer engagement via digital media, Mr Kapoor said.

### 2. Submarine cable project resurfaces

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

The government remains keen on the 5-billion-baht submarine cable project, possibly with help from the infrastructure fund. According to Songporn Komolsuradej, permanent-secretary of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, CAT Telecom Plc has been assigned to conduct a feasibility study regarding investment and later make a proposal to Deputy Prime Minister Prajin Juntong, who chaired yesterday's meeting of the committee on electronic transactions development. The submarine project is part of the government's hard infrastructure development plan to promote Thailand as an Asean digital gateway. Previously, CAT Telecom PLC had been assigned to take responsibility for construction of the national submarine cable. The project, however, failed to get off the ground, as the state-owned company has yet to finish its organisational restructuring as required by the government's plan to set up a national holding firm. The cabinet in August approved the draft State-owned Enterprises Improving Governance Bill, which will play a vital role in driving state-backed firms to improve their services.

### **3. Lucky Flame eyeing Middle East, Africa**

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

Lucky Flame Co, the producer and distributor of gas stoves and accessories, is considering branching out into the Middle East and Africa in a bid to double its overseas sales over the next five years. Business development manager Chaolert Leelaswatanakoon said the company is interested in expanding its gas stove business into Middle Eastern countries and Africa, where customers have high purchasing power. It will join Thai trade exhibitions to be held by the Export Promotion Department next year. Apart from the two new regions, Lucky Flame will continue to expand its gas stove distribution business in Indochina, particularly Myanmar and Vietnam.

### **4. Design hub to upgrade Thai fashion**

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

The government has planned a design centre in an effort to improve the country's textile production technology and improve the added value of the garments industry with better fashion design. The new Thailand Industrial Design Centre (TIDC) will compete in the high-end market, said Prasong Nilbanjong, director of Thailand Textile Institute (THTI). THTI is one of 11 institutes working under the Industry Ministry to help support the private sector, comprising mostly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in research and development as well as design in order to create industrial products with added value, he said.

"The government wants the THTI to lend further support to SMEs and startups by helping to improve product development and efficiency. The TIDC will be the centre of design and technology," he said, adding that the design centre would gather garment and textile specialists, as well as designers, from France, Italy and the US. Mr Prasong said the THTI works with 40 other organisations in the public and private sectors to provide business information and market trends to help improve Thai textile products. Besides the plan to set up the TIDC, the institute has also launched a new ecotextile project to promote production of natural raw materials such as hemp fibre to tap into the organic trend, which has seen customers prefer eco-friendly products.

### **5. TPBI keeps focus on high-value plastics**

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

SET-listed TPBI Plc, a maker of plastic packaging, says it will maintain its plan to focus on high-value plastics production, especially special-grade plastics for the medical sector, aiming to double the proportion of high-value plastics to 40% within five years. Chief executive Somsak Borrisuttanakul said the plan is part of the company's strategy to capitalise on the global trend towards high-quality plastics, especially for medicine and health care, while the government has

set high-value plastics and bioplastics among the targeted industries for support. TPBI, which began developing the special-grade plastics this year, recently received an order for 300,000 bags for blood donations from the Thai Red Cross Society, Mr Somsak said. He said the company also plans to make colostomy bags to contain waste from an opening in the stomach. "We plan to produce more plastic for the medical sector as it is supported by the government and we expect our expanded production will get government investment privileges," he said.

**By Nandini Malhotra**

