

Daily Thai News Summary: 19 February 2016

1. Development plan for farmers going to panel

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

The chairman of the Thai Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Trade, Isara Vongkusolkit, said a six-month plan to accelerate the development of farmers would be forwarded to the Pracha Rath Synergy Committee early next month. The committee's meeting, which will be chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, is scheduled for early March. Members of 12 subcommittees under the Pracha Rath Synergy Committee will also attend the meeting. Isara, who is also member of a subcommittee for modern agricultural development under the Pracha Rath Synergy Committee, said its plans were aimed at the short, medium and long terms. The short-term plan, which will be implemented within six months, includes promotion of farming as a profession with higher income with higher standards of agricultural products, as well as joint cooperation between the private and public sectors for big lots of Pracha Rath farming.

Big farming lots will improve the value chain by matching private businesses with farmers in an area, possibly in the form of social enterprise. This programme aims at connecting producers with exporters. Mitr Phol Group, Charoen Pokphand Group, Thai Union Group and others will likely join this programme to develop value chains systematically. Another short-term programme is a prototype development of agricultural cooperatives to build up smart managers who have knowledge and capability in business development. The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives has agreed in principle for this programme with support from private sector players like Mitr Phol, CP Group and Thai Union. Isara said medium- and long-term plans had been finalised and would be proposed during the meeting for approval. He said all work plans and projects were aimed at developing and enhancing the capabilities of the agricultural sector and its operators from upstream to downstream.

2. Thai Optical invests in product development

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

Thai Optical Group plans to spend Bt800 million over three years to develop innovative optical-lens products and increase its market share in the United States and in Asean countries. Managing director Torn Pra-charktam told a press conference yesterday that for this year, the company had budgeted Bt500 million, of which Bt350 million would be used to expand production capacity for prescription lenses, which is a product that generates a good profit. The

remaining Bt150 million this year is for a 360-degree rebranding to support the company's growth, which has been going at 10 per cent each year.

A total of Bt300 million will be spent next year and in 2018 to penetrate deeper in the US and Asean countries, especially Indonesia, Myanmar and Vietnam. About 95 per cent of sales go to the international market, mainly Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the US and the Asia-Pacific region. In the Asean market, the company aims to distribute its products through joint ventures in Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam and is studying and negotiating more for partnerships in Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar.

3. AEC, weak baht drive foreign demand for Bangkok condos

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

Demand from foreign investors to buy middle- to upper-market condominiums in Bangkok's central business districts (CBDs) is strong, especially from Asian countries, thanks to the Asean Economic Community having come into effect at the beginning of the year, plus the baht's continued weakness. Implementation of the AEC presents a positive challenge for Thailand's property developers to road-show their residential projects overseas, especially in China, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and the Middle East. *"We plan to road-show our luxury condominium projects in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore this year, having witnessed [foreign] demand to buy in these projects last year,"* said SC Asset Corp's chief executive officer, Nuttaphong Kunakornwong. The company's luxury Saladaeng Ond project, which was launched last year, has already achieved sales of Bt900 million to foreign buyers from Hong Kong, Singapore, China and Taiwan, he said. Up to 30 per cent of the customer target for Saladaeng One, which offers units from Bt13 million apiece - or Bt310,000 per square metre - is the foreign market, the CEO added.

4. IKEA breaks ground for Bang Yai outlet

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

Ikea held a groundbreaking ceremony in Bang Yai, Nonthaburi, yesterday for its second store in Thailand worth Bt6.3 billion along with executives from Central Pattana and local officials. *"We are creating the world's best integration of a Ikea store into a shopping centre,"* said Sebastian Hylving, expansion director for Ikano Private Ltd, holder of the Ikea franchise rights in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. The branch will offer wide-open entrances at all levels of the CentralPlaza WestGate shopping centre and a direct link to the future mass-transit line. In a highly complex design, the showroom and a market hall are housed inside an expansive two-storey concourse that creates a bridge to the WestGate mall. The Ikea self-service

warehouse will be on the ground floor. *"This is not going to be the usual blue box,"* said Lacia Sherlock, Ikea retail project leader for Ikano. *"This will be the only Ikea store that offers customers an opportunity to enter and check out at every level. We will deliver a fantastic customer experience."* Mike King, the Ikea retail director for Ikano, is confident that many of the 1.6 million people who live in Bang Yai and the surrounding area - including a growing population of young families - will make the trip to the new store when it opens at the end of next year.

5. True Move H stands to win support from six banks

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

The five Thai banks are Bangkok Bank, Krungthai Bank, Siam Commercial Bank, Kasikornbank and Kiatnakin Bank. ICBC will provide the largest bank guarantee, according to sources close to the matter. ICBC is a lender to China Mobile International, which has an 18-percent stake in True Corporation, the parent company of True Move H. Aphinant Klewpatinond, chief executive officer of Kiatnakin Bank, earlier said that under the Bank of Thailand's single-lending-limit rule the bank could support True to the tune of Bt9 billion.

An executive at SCB said the bank didn't have an SLL for the guarantee. Arthid Nanthawithaya, chief executive officer and deputy chairman of the executive committee at SCB, said that while the high prices True paid for the licences had increased its financial burden, the bank believed that having two 4G licences would strengthen its competitiveness in the long term. He would not disclose details of the bank guarantee but said the auction of the licences and the takeover of Big C Supercenter by Thai conglomerate TCC Group would boost corporate-loan demand this year.

6. Unique local products could be tourist draw

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

Local people are being urged to showcase their unique products to capture high-spending tourists as community-based and adventure tourism is booming in Asia, including Thailand. Mario Hardy, chief executive officer of the Pacific Asia Travel Association, said 280 delegates from around the world were gathering in Chiang Rai province until today, attending the "PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart". He said buyers and sellers were interested in adventure- and community-based tourism as these sectors are expanding throughout Asia. China, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam are part of this emerging trend. *"Thailand should take part of this growing ... by promoting new destinations such as Chiang Rai*

as alternative places for adventure and community tourism. The province should have more air connectivity now."

He said it was time for local communities nationwide to highlight their products to attract local and foreign tourists, particularly big spenders. Yuthasak Supasorn, governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, said the event would underscore Thailand's commitment to adventure- and community-based tourism as it works towards sustainable tourism development.

By Harsha Hazarika