

Daily Thai News Summary: 27 April 2016

1. Top Thai brands 2016 trade fair set to open in May

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

Thailand's internationally recognised brands will be nudged closer to Vietnamese consumers as the Top Thai Brands 2016, formerly known as the "Thailand Week" trade fair, is scheduled to take place in Ho Chi Minh City from May 6-8. The fair, jointly held by the Department of International Trade Promotion under the Thai Ministry of Commerce and Thai Consulate-General in HCM City, is among many collaborative activities between Vietnam and Thailand.

The move aims to enhance trade and investment cooperation relations between the two countries while creating a platform for both Vietnamese and Thai enterprises to enlarge their networks and further develop strategic partnerships. The Top Thai Brands 2016 offers tremendous business opportunities for various industries, including food and beverages, home appliances, automobile and motor spare parts, cosmetics and health care. It also covers other service sectors such as education, tourism, business franchising and catering services.

2. Exports of gems, jewellery expected to grow by 10% this year

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

Gem and jewellery exports are expected to grow by 10 per cent to US\$7.89 billion (Bt278 billion) this year, ensuring Thailand's position as the world's 13th-biggest supplier of the products. Malee Choklumlerd, director-general of the International Trade Promotion Department, said yesterday that exports of jewellery and ornaments this year should grow strongly to many markets, despite the uncertainty over global economic growth, as Thai gems are highly recognised as quality products with good designs. Last year, exports of jewellery and ornaments reached \$7.18 billion. Preeda Tiasuwan, chairman of Pranda Jewellery, one of Thailand's major jewellery producers and exporters, also said exports of gems should grow beyond 10 per cent this year on strong demand in many markets. Thai gems and jewellery are well accepted in international markets. *"Thai products rank in a good position compared with China and Vietnam. Thailand has high expertise in cutting and design in the industry from upstream to downstream. Thus this industry will continue to be the country's key export driver,"* she said.

In the first quarter of this year, exports of jewellery and ornaments excluding gold were up 3.1 per cent to \$1.98 billion, while exports of jewellery and ornaments including gold surged

72.3 per cent to \$4.72 billion. Preeda said sales of jewellery and ornaments had grown strongly thanks to online trading and the booming tourism industry. About 10 per cent of foreign travellers' spending will be on jewellery and ornaments, she said. The department will hold the 58th "Bangkok Gems and Jewellery Fair" from September 7-11 at Impact Muang Thong Thani. Malee said performing as the host of the major event was a significant mission. It is also a mechanism for the department to support the government's policy aimed at developing Thailand's competitiveness in trading and producing gems and jewellery, as the country is stepping up to become the world's centre of this industry.

3. Four dual track railway projects to go on Cabinet agenda next month

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

The four dual-track railway projects covering 535 kilometres with a total investment of Bt85.05 billion should be up for Cabinet approval in May, the transport minister said yesterday. *"Bidding on the four projects is scheduled to be launched between June and September before construction can commence in October,"* Arkhom Termpittayapaisith said. First of the four lines is the 132km Map Kabao-Jira route, which will cost Bt29.67 billion. The project, being considered by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), should be added to the Cabinet agenda in the second week of May. The targeted completion date is 2020. The second project, the 165km Nakhon Pathom-Hua Hin route costing Bt20.15 billion, should be ready by 2019, while the third is the 90km Hua Hin-Muang Prachuap Khiri Khan line worth Bt10.30 billion.

The last two projects have not yet undergone environment impact assessments (EIAs). *"However, the government can use Article 44 of the interim charter to go ahead with the bidding process to allow participation of private firms,"* Arkhom said. The fourth project, the 148km Lop Buri-Pak Nam Pho route requiring Bt24.94 billion of investment, has not passed the EIA review process. The project is scheduled for completion in 2020. The four projects, which feature a 1-metre gauge, are among seven projects covering 993km worth a total of Bt136.93 billion. Two of the projects under construction - the Kaeng Khoi-Chachoengsao and Jira-Khon Kaen routes covering 291km and a total investment of Bt34.63 billion - should be completed in 2019.

4. Wongnai lands series B funding from InVent

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

Five year old start-up Wongnai, the country's largest food and lifestyle review portal and application, yesterday officially announced it was receiving series-B funding from Intouch Holding's venture-capital arm, InVent. The move is expected to result in Wongnai increasing its revenue by 200 per cent this year, and to drive the company towards a listing on the Market for Alternative Investment or the Stock Exchange of Thailand in the next three years. Co-founder and CEO Yod Chinsupakul said the company planned to use the new funding to expand its business in three directions: into the provinces; into additional review categories; and diversifying from the advertising model only to charging a transaction fee. First off is to expand its market coverage to Hua Hin and Nakhon Ratchasima, which will give it six offices outside Bangkok by the year's end. Second is to cover more lifestyle review categories by adding the travel industry this year. *"Wongnai is not just about food reviews, as lifestyle reviewing also has potential. We have the beauty and spa review category, which last year accounted for 15 per cent of our traffic of 9 million visitors per month, and contributed around 10 per cent to revenue,"* Yod said. Last but not least, Wongnai's revenue stream will also be transaction-fee based, via the offering of deals and delivery service.

Currently, the business partners with LINE Man to provide delivery for 1,000 recommended restaurants out of 80,000 Bangkok restaurants in Wongnai's database. It might add delivery service for more restaurants in the future, he added. *"Investment capital will be used to continue our growth, including increasing our monthly active users from 600,000 to one million, and to increase staff from 80 to 110 by the end of this year,"* he explained. The CEO said Wongnai's focus on Thailand, and not only in the capital, was the main strength that had attracted InVent to commit to series-B investment.

5. Live to create R&D unit for Thai market

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

LINE Thailand has announced plans to create a new research and development unit in Thailand, to recruit Thai developers and create new services and apps that answer Thai users' needs. *"A Devevelopment Team will be set up in Thailand, with the ambition of developing the next new services of LINE by a Thai team, for the 33 million LINE users. We are looking for energetic, and crazy talented developers, who want to make an impact, and create useful services in Thai people's daily lives,"* said Ariya Banomyong, managing director of LINE Thailand.

In a statement, the company said that it was encouraged by the Thai government's greater focus on the IT industry. LINE Thailand currently has five core business units - games, content, business solutions, e-commerce, and payment. All the existing apps and services have been built by developers in other countries and then adapted or adjusted for the Thai market. Some apps like LINE TV and LINE Music were created based in part on ideas from Thailand, but development was always ultimately directed by other LINE offices.



By Harsha Hazarika