

## Daily Thai News Summary: 2 March 2016

### 1. JSCCIB backs digital economy, e-commerce; urges private sector to cut water usage

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

The Joint Standing Committee on Commerce, Industry and Banking has pledged its support for Thailand's digital economy and to push for e-commerce adoption, in order to increase national competitiveness both regionally and globally. The JSCCIB, which comprises the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI), the Board of Trade of Thailand and the Thai Bankers' Association, yesterday also decided to run a campaign urging the private sector to reduce water usage by 20-30 per cent by June, said Supant Mongkolsuthree, chairman of the FTI. The committee found that the economy had not brightened in January, with economic activities slowing from the previous month, while tourism was the only sector with consistent growth momentum. The state budget had been disbursed consistently, it said, but at a declining pace after investment-budget disbursement was accelerated in the first quarter of the fiscal year, which began in October.

### 2. Thai hotel eyes Bruneian investors

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

An Islamic-themed hotel in Thailand is seeking business partners from Brunei for its food catering services as it eyes more Muslim clients, including from the sultanate. In an interview with The Brunei Times recently, Sanya Saengboon, managing director and general manager of Al-Meroz Hotel in Thailand, said the hotel has partnered up with a number of travel agents in Brunei to attract more Muslim visitors from Brunei. He said the hotel is providing *facilities that are designed to ensure the comfort and well-being of both Muslim and non-Muslim guests. "All meals in our restaurants are halal-certified (by the Thailand government) and alcoholic drinks are prohibited,"* Sanya said. The general manager also invites Bruneian entrepreneurs who are interested to have joint ventures in Thailand to work with the hotel and cooperate in the area of providing halal meals to the hotel's clients. *"Brunei has halal products. We will mostly welcome Bruneian entrepreneurs who are interested to partner with us,"* said Sanya. Brunei and Thailand should bank on the growing number of Muslims in the world which is an opportunity to develop one another's tourism industry, he said. *"Both countries can cooperate with one another in terms of halal product and service marketing,"* said Sanya. The Brunei government can also cooperate with the hotel in terms of human resource management, he added. *"Over 60 per cent of our staff are Muslims who have been trained on Islamic dress code. Not only Bruneians can become our partners, but we are also welcoming Bruneians to work here too."*

### **3. Bangkok Airways adding new routes as it eyes 10% growth**

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

Bangkok Airways this year plans to spread its wings further in China and Southeast Asia, as well as in the domestic market, as it aims to increase operating revenue by 10-11 per cent from the Bt24.9 billion generated last year. President Puttipong Prasarttong-Osoth said yesterday that the airline would operate three new routes this year: Chiang Mai-Mae Hong Son, Bangkok-Danang in Vietnam, and Koh Samui-Guangzhou in China. The carrier also intends increasing daily frequencies on the Bangkok-Phnom Penh route from five to six flights, on the Bangkok-Chiang Mai route from seven to eight flights, on the Chiang Mai-Koh Samui route from one to two flights during the high season, and on the Koh Samui-Singapore route from one to two flights. *"We expect to receive six or seven aircraft, including three ATR72-600s and three Airbus A319s, which will increase our fleet to 36 this year and help increase seating capacity by 4-5 per cent,"* he said.

Bangkok Airways will also increase the number of its code-share partners from 20 airlines currently, he said, adding that it was in discussions with seven or eight Asia-Pacific carriers about this. The airline expects the number of passengers it carries to rise to between 5.7 million and 5.8 million this year, 10-11 per cent up from 5.1 million in 2015. The current load factor is 77 per cent, which is the peak to date for this year's high season, while the load factor for the year to date is 68-70 per cent, Puttipong said. The company plans to add 60-66 pilots this year to the current 328 that it employs, with about 45 of the new recruits coming from Bangkok Airways' internal pilot training programme, he said. The airline also plans to expand the terminal and commercial areas at its flagship airport in Koh Samui, to cope with the growing number of people visiting the resort island. Over the next 15-20 years, Samui Airport is expected to accommodate up to 5 million arrivals per year, against nearly 2 million last year.

### **4. Nod to solar plant projects in Japan**

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

The board of Thai Solar Energy (TSE) has approved investment in solar power plants in Japan, raising its overseas production capacity to 100 megawatts, chief executive officer Dr Cathleen Maleenont said. She said the company would continuously enhance its solar-power generation capacity both in Thailand and overseas, especially Japan, where it has identified opportunities for future investment in solar farms. The company is in the process of negotiating with a few Japanese business alliances in order to invest in solar farm projects with total capacity of 40-50MW. The results of the negotiation should be finalised by midyear. At its most recent meeting, the board of directors approved a contractual agreement with Prospec Holdings Inc for the construction of solar farms with installed operating capacity of 17.5MW in Ishikawa

prefecture. The estimated budget for the projects' development is Bt2 billion and construction is due to commence this quarter, with completion expected next year.

Currently, the combined capacity of TSE's projects in Japan is about 42MW. *"We are at the forefront in the expansion of renewable-energy power plants in Asia, both solar power and other types of energy sources, through collaborations with project-development alliances to lift TSE as a leading corporation in the energy business in Asia, especially Japan and AEC member states,"* Cathleen said. She added that TSE aimed to reach a target capacity of 100MW in its overseas projects this year, and to raise that to 300MW within three years. Meanwhile, TSE announced a 139-per-cent surge in power sales in 2015, while net operating profit (exclusive of special items) increased by 38 per cent from 2014 after full-year realisation of revenue from rooftop solar panels installed on commercial buildings.

## **5. TUC to invest BT57 Bn over 3 years, aiming to rule mobile telecom roost**

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

TRUE MOVE H Universal Communication (TUC) aims to become the top dog in mobile-phone coverage on all frequencies by investing Bt57 billion over three years. *"We expect to see revenue from our mobile-phone services grow more than 17.3 per cent this year. We are also aiming to secure a market share of at least 30 per cent, up from the current 21 per cent, within three years,"* Suphachai Chearavanont, chief executive officer of True Group, said yesterday. The capital expenditure budget will be financed by a capital increase from major shareholders, supplier credit, loans and cash. This year will see the company investing Bt40 billion, of which Bt36 billion will go to installing 20,000 base stations for the 900-megahertz network and Bt4 billion to add 3,000 base stations to its current 22,000 base stations for the 1,800MHz and 2.1-gigahertz networks to cover 98 per cent of the population.

Its third-generation network on 850MHz will run on 16,000 base stations. True will also seek new users shifting from Advanced Info Service's the 2G service after launching 2G and 4G services on 900MHz this month. *"We plan to pay the first instalment [of its upfront fee for the 900MHz licence] and place bank guarantees in two weeks,"* he said after TUC signed letters of guarantee with six banks for Bt73.04 billion. The guarantors are Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Thai) with half of the total, Bangkok Bank, Kasikornbank and Siam Commercial Bank with Bt10.5 billion each, Krungthai Bank with Bt4 billion and Kiatnakin Bank with Bt3 billion. The five Thai banks insisted that they had no problems with the Bank of Thailand's single lending limit and could continue to support True in the future.

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