

Daily Thai News Summary: 7 March 2016

1. Thailand pushes for next generation automotive

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

Thailand has stressed its desire to be the manufacturing hub for eco and hybrid vehicles. During his meeting with top executives of Japanese auto makers today, Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha said that these cars would pave way for the manufacturing of high-technology electric and hydrogen-driven vehicles. He also stressed the Thai government's focus on low-emission vehicles as well as those that are driven by ethanol and biodiesel. Attending the "Prime Minister Meets CEOs #2nd Series" today were the executives of Toyota, Isuzu, Nissan and Honda.

According to Deputy government spokesman Maj-Gen Veerachon Sukonthapatipark, all the Japanese automakers showed their supports to turn Thailand into the manufacturing centre of high-technology vehicles. Veerachon said that Toyota planned to manufacture hybrid cars in Thailand, while Isuzu mulled the production of environmental-friendly and hybrid pickup trucks. Nissan eyes export-oriented manufacturing of electric cars in Thailand while Honda is turning Thailand into the regional-level research and development centre, Veerachon added.

2. Chinese firms seek part in Sawei SEZ

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

Italian-Thai Development (ITD) is forming a consortium with Chinese companies to pour investment into new infrastructure projects in Dawei Special Economic Zone (DSEZ), as land lease in the initial phase kicks off. According to Somjetn Tinnapong, managing director of Myanmar Industrial Estate (MIE) - an ITD subsidiary responsible for the development of the 27-square kilometre initial phase - the consortium will consist of private and state-owned Chinese companies. Their focus will be on the 132-kilometre, four-lane road, which will require an investment of Bt13.5 billion and three ports that will cost US\$400 million (Bt14 billion). "*What was planned earlier has been altered under the new paradigm,*" he said, adding that ITD president Premchai Karnasutra led the delegation to Nay Pyi Taw last week to meet the Dawei Special Economic Zone management committee. He said the Chinese companies include King Trillion and China Railway Engineering Corp (CREC), a key player in China's ambitious One Belt One Road project. The four-lane road connecting Thailand's Kanchanaburi and Dawei is considered a must to materialise the DSEZ, which is 374km from Yangon. Dawei is at one end of the East-West Economic Corridor, linking Myanmar in the West to Vietnam in the East. Somjetn did admit that this would depend on the political winds in Myanmar.

3. Chiang Rai “gateway to boost trade with neighbouring nations”

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

Chiang Rai province has the potential to be a gateway for expanding trade and investment with three neighbouring countries. Trade between the province and these neighbouring markets was worth Bt48 billion last year, some 14 per cent higher than bilateral commerce worth Bt42 billion in 2014, Anurat Intorn said, adding that Chiang Rai also had a combined trade surplus with the three countries. The chamber, meanwhile, targets bilateral trade value reaching Bt50 billion this year. The main products exported to China, Laos and Myanmar include consumer products, construction materials, agricultural products and processed food. The chamber chief said Chiang Rai had also been designated a special economic zone (SEZ) under the government's policy to promote investment in border provinces, as a result of which the province would challenge for both local and foreign businesses wishing to expand their investment.

Chiang Rai, which borders southern China, Laos and Myanmar, has good links to the three countries for the transportation of products via Chiang Khong, Mae Sai and Chiang Saen. The number of investors expanding their presence in the province is therefore expected to expand as a result of such advantages, he said. *"We have seen CP Land taking over a hotel in Chiang Khong, while SCG Group is interested in investment in warehousing for construction materials, and beverage tycoon Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi also owns more land in Chiang Rai, which may be developed into a hotel in the future,"* Anurat added. Meanwhile, enterprises in China are interested in investing in logistics business in Chiang Rai, especially in Chiang Khong district, he added. Most of these parties are currently waiting to see the benefits that will be provided by the government under the SEZ in Chiang Rai.

4. Thai Life Insurance buoyed by study results

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

THAI LIFE Insurance is pleased with the results of research finding that its brand is viewed positively by Thai consumers. Company president Chai Chaiyawan said Intage (Thailand) had conducted a study on Thai Life's image through both qualitative and quantitative research involving 4,000 consumers, 1,000 in Bangkok and the rest upcountry. Of the total, 1,500 respondents held life-insurance policies, 500 did not, and 2,000 were a random sample. The research found that consumers had good feelings about the Thai Life brand. The satisfaction index was 2.2, higher than the average of 1.94 for the overall life-insurance industry. Consumers saw the Thai Life brand as solid and distinctive. It was seen as a leader in terms of product innovation, interesting and memorable TV commercials, and providing clear information about its products. Its agents are knowledgeable enough to point consumers towards insurance policies that meet their needs. As well, it offers convenient payment channels. Thai

Life Insurance earned a very high score in the brand-awareness category. Consumers think of Thai Life first as a brand with high standards and innovative products and services.

5. Akaryn Group makes overseas debut with Vientiane Hotel

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

THAI hotel chain Akaryn Hotel Group will manage its first overseas property when The President by Akaryn opens in Vientiane in June. The hotel will consist of 30 guestrooms, two presidential suites and seven food and beverage outlets. It is centrally located between Parliament and the Emerald Buddha Hall - the country's most famous temple. Anchalika Kijkanakorn, founder and managing director of Akaryn, said the hotel was a gift from the Chinese government to Laotians two years ago. But she said the Lao government granted a concession to a Lao mining company for the hotel's continued construction. The company signed a 10-year management agreement with Akaryn. The hotel is being renovated by Thai firm Rocklike Company. *"The hotel will be the most luxurious hotel in Vientiane as well as in Laos,"* Anchalika said. The average room rate will be US\$500 (Bt18,000) while the presidential suite will cost a minimum of \$1,500. Anchalika said 50 per cent of the property's revenue would come from the rooms and the rest from food and beverage. The hotel will target the high-end markets in Laos and other countries, including Thailand. Diplomats are also a chief target, as are long-haul market such as Europe and the US.

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By Harsha Hazarika