

Daily Thai News Summary: 8 March 2016

1. Government gives nod to SEZ office

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

The government yesterday approved establishing the Office of Special Economic Zones to supervise and facilitate investment in SEZs. It also agreed to set up an ad hoc committee tasked with creating measures to attract investment in super clusters. Super clusters are designated investment centres for high-tech industries. The clusters will cover six industrial sectors: automotive; food processing; environmentally-friendly petrochemicals and chemicals; medical services; digital; and electronics, electrical appliances and telecommunications equipments.

2. More help on way for farm sector

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

The government will introduce a new stimulus package aimed at spurring the grassroots economy and cushioning the impact of the drought on the farm sector. Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak said yesterday after meeting senior Finance Ministry officials that the ministry would create a package within two weeks with a complete budget and projects to offer immediate help to those in need.

The government's projects in the first half of the year include an additional 35 billion baht for Village Funds under the Pracha Rat (People's State) initiative and 20 billion baht for development of IT and telecommunications projects. It is also spending 36.2 billion baht for rural development, while the Interior Ministry plans to use leftover budget of 50-60 billion baht from previous fiscal years for rural projects.

3. Thailand still a leader in top corporate roles for women

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

The Asia-Pacific region continues to make slow progress in getting women into senior corporate roles, though Thailand is among those bucking the trend, according to professional-services provider Grant Thornton. Asia-Pacific countries with the highest proportion of leadership roles held by women are the Philippines (39 per cent), Thailand (37 per cent) and

Indonesia (36 per cent). Globally, the proportion of senior business roles held by women stands at 24 per cent, up slightly from 22 per cent last year. Russia still has the most women specifically in executive roles (45 per cent), while the lowest proportion is reported in Japan (7 per cent).

Just 23 per cent of senior management roles in the Asia-Pacific region are held by women. In developed countries across the region, this figure has risen to 57 per cent from 53 per cent in 2015, while it has fallen substantially among the region's emerging economies to 20 per cent from 29 per cent. *"In Thailand, we've consistently held a leading position among the world's best-performing nations when it comes to the occupation of senior business roles by women,"* Sumalee Chokdeeanant, audit partner at Grant Thornton in Thailand, said yesterday. *"A well-established culture of women receiving further education and advocacy of women in business has spurred change."*

4. Project design from China

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

Thailand has recently received from the Chinese government the completed design for the Sino-Thai medium-speed train project. Wuthichart Kulyanamitra, governor of the State Railway of Thailand, said yesterday that the construction cost under the new design was also lower than the last projection of Bt530 billion. However, he declined to go into detail on the new designs and new cost. *"We are considering the new designs recently submitted by the Chinese side,"* he said. *"There is still a question left on the shares of investment from Thailand and China."*

5. New Google Country Head to bring million SME's online

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

Google Thailand's new head has set a business direction for this year to bring a million small and medium-sized enterprises online. Ben King, who was appointed country head in January, said yesterday that about 250,000-300,000 SMEs had begun doing business online. The company offers Google My Business, a free and easy-to-use tool for businesses, brands, artists as well as organisations to manage their online presence across Google, including Search and Maps, to support SMEs. SMEs contribute about 40 per cent of Thailand's gross domestic product. One of the areas is online experiences such as "search lite", which will provide faster searches, and YouTube offline. Another is video data plans for the growing number of Internet users in the country and local content.

The company now provides 45 localised products out of the 55 products available in Thailand. The third focus area is education. Google targets training 100,000 students through a series of online videos and self-learning courses. Last, it will help SMEs go online. That would help SMEs to grow with an effective online presence. With business leverage for business, the company will help SME advertisers reach consumers through the mobile platform as they search, watch videos, browse sites and use apps.

6. Hotel Management firm has ambitious expansion plans in Thailand and abroad

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

BESPOKE HOSPITALITY Management Asia (BHMA) plans to sign 20 management contracts per year with hotels domestically and overseas to cash in on the growth of the tourism industry. Meanwhile, the group will focus more on non-core business including yachts, private cruises, private jets, limousines and spas. Anthony McDonald, group chief executive officer, said BHMA expected to sign 20 management contracts this year and about the same number over each of the next three years. Currently, the group operates hotels under four brands, namely X2, X2 Vibe, Away, and Golden Tulip. There are 11 X2 hotels and another 14 planned, one X2 Vibe and eight planned. The number of Golden Tulips is to double from the current three. Within three years there are to be 44 properties in total, consisting of more than 3,000 rooms.

Some of hotels signing management contracts are abroad, including Vietnam and Indonesia. Of the total properties in the group, McDonald wholly owns three hotels. They are X2 in Kui Buri, Prachuap Khiri Khan province, X2 on Koh Samui, and Away on Koh Kut in Trat province. He said the group would expand into Myanmar, Luang Prabang in Laos, and Seam Reap in Cambodia this year to manage hotels there. The group is also eyeing opportunities in other regions such as Europe, the Middle East and Japan. The expansion will be mostly in the form of management contracts, while some may be joint ventures.

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By Harsha Hazarika