

Daily Thai News Updates: 23 February 2017

1. Hitachi sets up elevator engineer training hub in Chon Buri

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

Hitachi Ltd and Hitachi Building Systems Company yesterday announced the official launch of the Asia Training Centre in Chon Buri province for engineers involved in the elevator and escalator business. The training centre, which is Hitachi's first outside Japan, started soft operations last month, and is positioned to focus on installation and maintenance skills and safety controls for Hitachi's elevators and escalators in the region. It will foster mid-level engineers in Asian countries and ensure higher quality and safety than ever, which Hitachi claims is its top priority. The plan is to increase the level of installation and maintenance operations of elevators and escalators in the Asian region and accelerate the development of engineers at the same time.

2. Life insurance industry's income to grow more strongly this year

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

The Thai Life Assurance Association has projected that premium income this year will grow by 6 per cent to Bt600 billion, up from last year's 5.7 per cent, as low interest rates encourage insurance companies to move into investment-linked products and those that target specific customer segments. Life insurance industry's income to grow more strongly this year. The digital age will play a stronger role in the insurance industry, so upcoming products will be simpler so people can purchase them via digital channels. She said the government policy to enhance the domestic economy would be positive for incomes of consumers. Moreover, the expansion of insurance companies' investment in Asean countries and beyond in the form of joint ventures and branches will also contribute to their revenue growth.

3. Hotel M&A's expected to continue, says JLL

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

The flurry of hotel-industry mergers and acquisitions seen in 2016, with high-profile deals such as Marriott International's acquisition of Starwood Hotels & Resorts and HNA Tourism Group Co's purchase of Carlson Hotels, is likely to continue this year, according to JLL. "Hotel brands will always look to bolster their supply pipeline and the surest way to grow is often by acquiring operators with management and franchise contracts," said Lauro Ferroni, senior vice president of the JLL Hotels & Hospitality Group. He said portfolios with a full range of offerings from service levels to geography are most attractive to investors. Frank Sorgiovanni, head of research for Asia-Pacific, added: "We expect to see more consolidation among operators and real-estate owners alike due to key players' need to remain competitive through efforts that align growth strategies."

4. US grants one-year extension of GSP privileges for Thai products

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

The United States has agreed to extend trade preferences for Thai products for another year. Duangporn Rodphaya, director-general of the Foreign Trade Department, said yesterday that the move would help Thai exporters save at least Bt70 million in import duties. For video cameras and optical lenses, exports have not yet exceeded the CNL, so the US automatically extended the Generalised System of Preferences for both categories. The US has set a ceiling for GSP privileges at US\$175 million (Bt6.13 billion) a year, but exports of video cameras reached \$157.2 million and of lenses \$155.07 million last year. The US is Thailand's second-largest overseas market after Asean. The value of Thai exports to the US expanded by 1.8 per cent to \$24.49 billion last year, which accounted for 11.4 per cent of this country's total exports.

5. Sky is the limit for ticket booking application of Penguin airline

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

Penguin, Thailand's first travel-tech mobile application, is expected to generate online air-ticket transactions valued at Bt500 million annually in the next couple of years, making it the No-1 travel app in a fast-growing market. Kittikorn Kunnalekha, chief executive officer of Asia One Click, said the company had developed Penguin as an air-travel booking app to support the high growth potential for online airline ticketing. The mobile app sets out a range of special prices and promotions, from which users can choose the best option and reserve and pay for the ticket via their smart phone. "We are providing a travel-tech application to support the new era of online travel. Our system is able to connect with more than 500 airlines with promotions and special prices for customers. The software was launched at the end of last year and Penguin now has around 20,000 active download users, which is expected to rise to 300,000 active users by the end of this year," he explained. Asia One Click expects that within the next couple of years, Penguin users will be generating ticket purchases worth around Bt500 million annually, making it the app the Thai market leader for mobile reservations, the CEO added.

By Shreya Chopra

