

## Daily Thai News Updates: 26 April 2017

### 1. Bahrainis treat PM in style on official visit

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

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha will wrap up his official visit to Bahrain today after attending a bilateral signing agreement ceremony over agriculture, tax, university cooperation and education between the two countries. Gen Prayut and a group of Thai delegation arrived at Manama, the capital of Bahrain, on Monday. This is Gen Prayut's first official visit to the Middle East. Thai delegation who accompanied the Prime Minister includes Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai, Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn, and Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister General Chatchai Sarikulya. Gen Prayut and the Thai officials were welcomed by Bahraini PM Prince Khalifa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa at Bahrain International Airport and then escorted to a lounge in a special arrival lobby...At the meeting, three bilateral agreements were signed between Thailand and Bahrain on agriculture, tax, and university cooperation and education. Gen Prayut said the agreements will allow the two countries to work together to boost bilateral trade and investment. He said they would also help tackle problems regarding trade and investment in both countries. Gen Prayut said he hopes the agreements will strengthen cooperation between Thailand and Bahrain to improve tourism and generate incomes.

### 2. Govt starts new campaign to curb websites

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

The national telecom regulator and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (DE) have reiterated their demand that all internet service providers (ISPs) and international internet gateway providers block webpages and content that contain or promote illegal acts or breach Section 112 of the Criminal Code, the lese majeste law. The agencies also want ISP cooperation to remove illicit video streaming on Facebook and YouTube from their local network server, called a content delivery network (CDN). Usually, providers such as Facebook and YouTube use them to speed up access to data and reduce demand on bandwidth. Usually, providers such as Facebook and YouTube use them to speed up access to data and reduce demand on bandwidth. "Despite good cooperation between the regulator and the ministry to prevent illicit content on websites over the

last two years, the government hopes for more, and expects better result by next month," according to Takorn Tantasith the NBTC secretary-general.

### **3. Transaction draft bill for May finish**

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

The Finance Ministry is rushing to draft a new secured transactions bill with the aim of improving the law and meeting international standards before the World Bank assesses Thailand's ease of doing business in May. "Instead of amending the current law, we would rather make a new draft to ensure it is up-to-date and coherent, as well as easier and simpler to understand and operate than the existing one," said Finance Minister Apisak Tantivorawong. Mr Apisak hired a consulting team from World Bank who suggested Thailand draft the new bill within 20 days. "They told me it will take one month to finish the draft but we want to make it before the World Bank's assessment team comes here in May. We have to make it within 20 days," he said. Thailand is focused on improving its ranking for ease of doing business to make the country more attractive for foreign investors. The World Bank's 2017 rankings will be announced at the end of the year.

### **4. Towards quality tourism development**

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

Thailand has one of the world's fastest-growing tourism industries, with an average annual growth rate of 6.5 per cent. Tourism accounts for 11 per cent of its gross domestic product. For the past two or three years, the sector has been just about the only engine fuelling economic growth. Successive governments have worked to increase foreign-tourist arrivals as well as domestic tourism. Last year, foreign-visitor arrivals crossed the 30-million mark for the first time. To bump up tourism strategy, Thailand would do well to focus on "quality tourism", according to Deepak Ohri, chief executive of luxury-hospitality company Lebua Hotels and Resorts. He says quality tourism revolves around culture and conservation that runs in parallel with improved infrastructure like more airports, railways and shopping places outside Bangkok. While acknowledging Thailand's strong cultural heritage, Ohri believes that a broader range of cultural attractions, dining outlets and shopping centres would be useful in bringing in more visitors, ultimately improving their quality. But he warns that the balance should not be swung too far in favour of tourism. "When you come to a country and you respect the culture of that country, that's quality

tourism. Once people learn the word ‘respect’, automatically people spend money. Quality tourism is not about filtering out some tourists, rather about changing the concept of visitors. When you upgrade yourself, automatically consumers get upgraded.

## **5. Japan’s GSP cuts to have little impact on exporters, Commerce**

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

Thailand will likely suffer minimal impacts if Japan cuts its Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) on Thai products, said Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn yesterday. In response to news of the likely GSP cut, Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn explained that only a small number of Thai exporters employed the GSP, as they mostly export products to Japan under trade agreements that reduce tariffs to rates lower than those under the GSP. Under the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement (JTEPA) and Asean-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) for about 6,000 product items, Thailand exports about US\$6 billion (Bt206 billion) worth per annum to Japan. Only six Thai products worth about \$17 million per annum have been exported to Japan under the GSP. Apiradi said those six products would be affected if Japan cuts its GSP. They are sorbitol, roasted decaffeinated coffee beans, ethyl alcohol, certain types of plywood, laminated wood, and blockboard. Most of them have seen gradual tariff reductions under JTEPA and AJCEP. Only sorbitol is excluded from the tariff cuts listed under these trade agreements. Generally, GSP tariff privileges are granted to developing countries. However, as global economic and trade conditions have been changing, Japan between 2013 and 2015 re-examined its GSP policy for countries in the upper-middle-income group that account for more than 1 per cent of global export value. Thailand has been categorised in the upper-middle-income group since 2011, and its exports amounted to 1.21 per cent of the global total in 2013, 1.20 per cent in 2014 and 1.29 per cent in 2015. Thus Japan is considering a GSP cut for Thailand from 2019 onward.

## **6. Draft IMT-GT joint statement approved**

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

The cabinet yesterday approved the draft of a joint statement for the 10th round of talks on the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) at the Asean Summit that takes place from today until Saturday. At the Cabinet meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan yesterday, Athisit Chaiyanuwat, deputy government spokesman, said the statement would be used for a joint meeting of the three countries during the Asean Summit and other relevant meetings. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha will join the Asean Summit in Manila, and a parallel session for the IMT-GT will be hosted by Malaysia at the same event. The leaders of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia will discuss the roles of the IMT-GT in strengthening the global economic community. Previously, despite of the sluggishness of the global economy, the IMT-GT economy maintained its strength with combined average annual growth of 6.9 per cent from 2011-2015, while its gross domestic product per capita rose to US\$13,844, higher than Asean's \$11,009. The three leaders will ratify two documents. One is "IMT-GT 2036", which is a guide to drive for the triangle's development as a subregion with integrated innovation, less inequality and more sustainability, and the other is the five-year plan (2017-2021).