

Thai News Update: 23 March 2018

1. UN Team To Assess Rights Issues Across Industries

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

The United Nations Working Group on business and human rights will undertake its first official visit to Thailand from next week to examine efforts to prevent, mitigate and remedy human rights impacts of business operations. Thailand is the second-largest economy in Southeast Asia and an important player in sectors such as mining, agriculture, tourism, fisheries, palm oil, telecommunication, electronics, finance and energy”, said Dante Pesce, vice-chairperson of the Working Group, ahead of the visit from March 26 to April 4. “We look forward to learn more about ongoing work to develop a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, as part of efforts to ensure that companies operating in Thailand, as well as Thai companies operating abroad, respect human rights.” “During our mission to Thailand we will meet with a wide range of stakeholders, including national and provincial government authorities, private and state-owned enterprises, business associations, civil society organisations, the National Human Rights Commission, trade unions, human rights defenders and members of local and indigenous communities”, said Surya Deva, the other member of the working group’s visiting delegation.

2. Bid For Tariff Exclusion

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

The Department of Foreign Trade has expedited its procedures for a request to exclude Thailand from the recently announced US tariffs on steel and aluminum product imports, after the United States announced its procedures for exclusion requests on March 19. Adul Chotinisakorn, DFT director-general, said the department had held discussions with the Federation of Thai Industries, Iron and Steel Institute of Thailand, Metal Tube and Cold-Forming Steel Association, related Thai manufacturers and exporters as well as the Office of Commercial Affairs in Washington, DC last on March 20 for submission of the exclusion request. Thai manufacturers and exports will join US importers to submit the exclusion requests which will show that steel and aluminum product imports from Thailand are not produced or in insufficient amount in the US and it is necessary to import Thai steel and aluminum products to prevent any impacts from the US

measures on US importers or users, he said. On March 8, 2018, US President Donald Trump announced that the US would impose tariffs of 25 per cent on steel and 10 per cent on aluminum on every foreign shipment of those metals into the US, with exemptions for Canada and Mexico, in order to protect national security.

3. Which Asian Country Has The Highest And Lowest Unemployment Rates

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

Mongolia, Pakistan, Indonesia and Philippines have the highest employment rates in Asia. By contrast, Cambodia, Thailand and Laos post the lowest unemployment rates. Mongolia has the highest employment rate in Asia with 7.3 per cent. The country has seen a poor labour market with a dipping employment rate. Even during the economic boom from 2010-2014 the employment rates remained steady in the country. Pakistan has the second highest employment rate in Asia of 5.9 per cent. The political unrest in the country has hugely been contributing to the dampening growth as a result of which unemployment has risen. Indonesia and Philippines have 5.5 and 5.3 per cent employment rate respectively. The experts blame the worsening Philippine economy on the neo liberal policies that have kept the agriculture economy at a back burner. Laos and Thailand are amongst the countries with a low employment with majority of people in Laos employed in agriculture sector. Myanmar and Cambodia have the lowest percentage of people out of the labour force.

4. E-Labels And Smart Packaging

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

E-labelling, smart packaging and global partnerships offer new ways for companies to create more loyal customers and increase profitability. In 2018 these factors will be crucial for those aspiring to succeed in the food industry, where customers' demands for transparency are increasing, says Colin Elkins, global industry director for process manufacturing at the enterprise software provider IFS. With governments, industry bodies, consumer groups and retailers pressing for more transparency and more information -- but on simpler labels, e-labels are a powerful solution. They could also be an appealing, immersive new sales channel. QR codes on food products can take shoppers to a website where they will not just see required regulatory information, but allergen

inclusions, the environmental story of the product, its GMO status, which farm and farmer it came from, its ethical credentials, green benefits and the brand's CSR efforts.

5. HMD Keen On Thai Market

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

Thailand's mobile phone industry is the largest value market in Asia-Pacific outside China thanks to consumer spending, says HMD Global, the producer of Nokia phones. "Thailand is one of the significant mobile phone markets in the region for the Nokia brand as the market value reaches US\$5 billion [156 billion baht] a year, 90% of which is from smartphones," said Sandeep Gupta, a regional general manager of Thailand of HMD Global. HMD aims to be among the top 2-3 producers in the global smartphone market over the next few years. Boonchai Wattananimitporn, product manager of Vivo Thailand, said the company will introduce two models every year and tighten the brand marketing budget as its brand has established itself over the past few years. The company will focus mainly on mid-priced smartphones (10,000-17,000 baht), which it finds attracts 70-80% of new buyers in the replacement market, particularly youth.

6. Efforts Urged To Draw Wealthy US Visitors

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

US tour operators have suggested Thailand train more hospitality professionals to support high-end visitors, whose ranks are expected to grow. Although the country has offered good services to foreigners, it should improve overall service standards and train hospitality professionals to meet the requirements of high-end American visitors, he said. Srisuda Wanapinyosak, deputy governor for international marketing in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas at the Tourism Authority of Thailand, said 1.06 million Americans travelled to Thailand in 2017, a figure that is expected to rise by 12% this year.