

Thai News Update: 26 March 2021

1. Huawei aims to transform Chiang Mai University into 5G Smart Uni

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

Huawei Technologies (Thailand) Co Ltd on Friday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Chiang Mai University (CMU), aiming to transform CMU into a smart university using innovative digital platforms. The installation of state-of-the-art integrated infrastructure, and the adoption of 5G and other emerging technologies, such as Big Data and Cloud services, is expected to reinforce CMU's position as the leader in Southeast Asia's education sector, they said. The two parties had signed an MoU last November to develop ICT professionals through the Huawei ICT Academy Program, offering practical courses and on-the-job training for CMU students to prepare them for successful careers in the digital era.

2. Thailand and UK advance towards free trade agreement

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

Thailand and the United Kingdom will sign an agreement to set up a Joint Trade Committee on Commerce and Economic Cooperation this month, with both countries eyeing a free trade agreement (FTA). Thailand informed the UK it was interested in forging an FTA at a teleconference meeting with Britain's trade envoy Mark Garnier on Monday (March 22), said Sansern Samalapa, deputy commerce minister. Thailand will become the first country in Asean to sign a trade deal with the UK after it left the European Union at the beginning of this year.

3. Private tourism sector wants govt to reopen country from July 1, submits plan

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

Thai tourism and airline businesses have urged the government to reopen the country from July 1. The operators led by Marisa Sukosol Nunbhakdi, president of Thai Hotels Association, met Minister of Tourism and Sports Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn to discuss the government's vaccination distribution plan and the schedule for reopening the country. Global attention has now shifted to vaccinating national populations against Covid-19. Many countries, particularly in Europe, the Middle East, the United States and China began their vaccination programmes months ago. It is expected that up to 70 per cent of citizens in these countries will have been inoculated by the end of August.

4. Cabinet okays Bt350bn aid measure for tourism industry, small businesses hit by Covid

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

The Cabinet approved two aid measures proposed by the Finance Ministry on 16 March, Deputy PM Supattanapong Punmeechaow said. Under the scheme, Bt250 billion under a revive and restart credit measure for hotel operators and tourism businesses and about Bt100 billion for an “asset warehousing” project to help small businesses. Under the warehousing project, small business owners can “park” their assets and buy them back over five years. The businesses will be allowed to continue using the property.

5. Thailand on mission to become 'hub' of Asia-Pacific space industry

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

Boosted by Swedish expertise and investment, Thailand has launched a mission to become the hub of Asia Pacific’s space industry. On 24 March, Thailand’s Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) hosted executives from the Swedish Space Corporation (SSC) and Sweden’s ambassador for talks on expanding cooperation in space technology development. SSC established a satellite ground station at the GISTDA-run Space Krenovation Park in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) three years ago, becoming the largest foreign investor in Thailand’s space programme.

6. SCB forms JV with Indonesian travel app Traveloka

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

Siam Commercial Bank Plc, the country's third-largest bank by assets, on 26 March announced a joint venture with Indonesian startup Traveloka to offer financial services and products to Thai customers. The new joint venture, TREX Ventures, will combine Traveloka's understanding of user behaviour and tap into SCB's 16 million customers, Pitiporn Phanaphat, the chief financial officer of the bank's venture arm, SCB 10X, said in a statement. The announcement comes as Thai banks ramp up digital offerings and investments in technology. TREX Ventures is SCB's second partnership with an Indonesian startup. In 2019, it invested in Indonesian ride-hailer Gojek.

7. Ministry sets up panel devoted to BCG economy

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

The Industry Ministry has set up a new committee on bio-, circular and green (BCG) economy to step up efforts at putting Thailand on a path toward economic sustainability. The establishment came after the government declared the BCG economic model as a national agenda, hoping it will speed up BCG development and help increase the value of farm products.

The government also approved a five-year strategic plan to promote BCG between 2021 and 2026. "Many countries are focusing on BCG, especially European countries and the US," said Industry Minister Suriya Jungrunreangkit. Bio-economy is particularly closely related to agriculture as it promotes the use of renewable resources as raw materials to produce energy, food and other value-added products that will be a new source of revenue for farmers. Agriculture and the food industry are among four strategic industries pushed forward by the government.

8. Smart estate goal aligns with state aspirations

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

The Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand (IEAT) has set a target to have six "Smart Eco" industrial estates, seaports and factories in Thailand this year under its plan to modernise factories and make them more environmentally friendly. The plan, which has been carried out for three years, is in line with the government's Industry 4.0 scheme that encourages operators to blend manufacturing with digital technology and data analysis. IEAT is applying eight criteria to choose industrial areas that match the smart eco concept.

9. Thailand set to be 'key logistics hub'

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

Thailand has the potential to become a key logistics hub in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) through its Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), a forum was told. "When we work together to fulfill the potential of the EEC, Thailand and the GMS can become a powerhouse across the world," said Narongchai Akrasanee, steering committee chairman of the Mekong Institute, at the opening of the GMS Logistics Forum held in Pattaya on Thursday. Mr Narongchai said connectivity in the logistics and transport sectors, especially in the EEC, is an important step Thailand needs to take to boost its competitive advantage in the global market. Development projects such as the Don Mueang–Suvarnabhumi–U-Tapao high-speed railway and the expansion of the sea port at Laem Chabang and Map Ta Phut in the EEC could transform Thailand into a logistics hub in GMS.