

Thai News Update: 8 March 2018

1. Robinson to Spend B15bn over 5 Years

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

Robinson Plc (ROBINS), the SET-listed department store developer under Central Group, has set a five-year plan to invest a combined 15 billion baht to expand its branches, particularly in Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) areas and secondary cities being promoted by the government. The plan, part of Central Group's five-year investment plan worth 200 billion baht, aims to increase net sales and Robinson's rental area to 1.2 million square metres from 950,000 sq m in 2017, said Wuttikiat Techamongklapiwat, the company's president. He said the company will budget an average of 3 billion baht to open two or three new Robinson department stores a year on plots of 35 rai, renovate existing stores and acquire new land plots. The expansion will focus largely on upcountry areas where there is still room to grow due to less competitiveness, Mr Wuttikiat said.

2. Economic Tailwinds Buoy Sector

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

The residential, office, retail and logistics sectors will continue to be robust this year thanks to the country's economic growth and the upbeat global outlook, says property consultant CBRE Thailand. Managing director Aliwassa Pathnadabutr said new condominium launches in Greater Bangkok this year will rise by 10-15% from 64,000 units last year because of strong confidence in the Thai economy among consumers and developers. The main contributors to the Thai economy are exports and tourism. Last year the country finished with 3.9% year-on-year GDP expansion, resulting from 9.9% growth in exports. The tourism sector, which accounted for 20% of the country's GDP, saw a record 35.4 million arrivals, a rise of 8.6% from 2016. Many developers over the last two years have shifted to the high-end segment from the middle-to lower-end markets.

3. Alibaba on Track for Digital Hub Investment in EEC, Somkid says

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

Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba aims to set up a digital hub in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) as part of its planned additional investments in the country, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid

Jatusripitak said. He met with Alibaba's head of globalisation leadership group, Angel Zhao Ying, in Thailand on March 7 as part of an arrangement for continued meetings between Thailand and Alibaba on the company's prospective investments in Thailand after a high-profile visit by its founder Jack Ma. Somkid said that Alibaba reconfirmed its plan to invest in Thailand and would proceed with the digital hub in the EEC. It will finalise the investment location in March and Ma is due to visit in April to meet Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha. The formal announcement of the investment plan is expected at that time. Alibaba already plans to invest in the logistics system in Thailand.

4. First Coins of Rama X Readied for April Debut

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

The first coins and banknotes to circulate under His Majesty the King's reign are expected to be launched in April, says an informed source at the Finance Ministry. The Treasury Department has prepared to mint a new set of circulating coins featuring a portrait of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn, the source said. The new coins will comprise nine denominations: 10 baht, five baht, two baht, one baht, 50 satang, 25 satang, 10 satang, five satang and one satang. Those valued at less than 25 satang are used for banks' account settlement.

5. Thailand Improves Ranking on Cloud Computing Scorecard

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

The Software Alliance (BSA) has released its 2018 Global Cloud Computing Scorecard, a flagship study that assesses cloud computing policies around the globe. Thailand ranks 19th out of 24 leading IT economies, compared to its ranking of 21st in 2016, indicating that the legal and regulatory environment for cloud computing in Thailand is improving, although significant gaps remain. The 2018 BSA Global Cloud Computing Scorecard is the newest version of the only report to rank countries' preparedness for the adoption and growth of cloud computing services. It is said to feature an updated methodology that better reflects the policies that have helped cloud computing's exponential growth over the past five years, putting additional emphasis on countries' privacy and cybersecurity laws and broadband infrastructure.

6. Foreign Websites to Come Under VAT Net

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

The Finance Ministry will soon impose a 7 per cent value-added tax (VAT) on foreign e-commerce transactions in an effort to ensure fair competition between international and local businesses, said the director general of the Revenue Department, Prasong Poonthanet. The department also signalled that it would order a block on the websites of any of the global e-commerce giants that failed to pay the tax. In other financial measures announced on March 7, the Cabinet approved tax credits for companies that hire holders of the state welfare cards. The tax credits would be applied at up to 1.5 times the expenses of such companies. The government stands to forego tax revenue of as much as Bt3 billion a year as a result of this initiative to help the poor. Prasong on March 6 said the department would this month submit a tax bill covering e-commerce to Finance Minister Apisak Tantivorawong for endorsement, before it goes to the Cabinet for approval.

7. Sepo Says Numerous PPP Projects on the Fast Track

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

Nearly half of the 966 billion baht worth of projects under the fast-track public-private partnership (PPP) scheme are expected to win approval from the PPP committee this year, says the head of the State Enterprise Policy Office (Sepo). Three projects, worth a combined 406 billion baht, are expected to be given the greenlight, said director-general Ekniti Nitithanprapas after the PPP committee meeting, chaired by Finance Minister Apisak. The three projects are the Orange Line's eastern and western sections, worth 195 billion baht; the Purple Line between Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road and Tao Poon, valued at 131 billion; and the Nakhon Pathom to Cha-am, Phetchaburi motorway project, worth 80 billion. Some 12 projects worth 966 billion baht are in the pipeline under the fast-track PPP investment scheme, which is part of the 1.62-trillion strategic PPP plan. The fast-track PPP projects generally get approved in nine months, compared with two years under the normal PPP process.