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Editorial

Thai government is committed to developing and promoting geographical indication (GI) products in every province to generate income for communities in order to boost community revenues. The government has succeeded in developing 126 products from 76 provinces with GI registration generating sales worth more than 5 billion baht.

The Director-General of the Intellectual Property Department has urged local administrations to seek their own unique products for GI registration. Recently, Ang Thong's traditional drum named "Ekkarat" is planned to be registered by the end of 2020. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, it is challenging to sell GI products. The department helped to sell GI products by moving to the online market, organized the "GI Market 2020" and GI Seminar to inspire and help local product producers to find new markets.

The certification of unique characteristics and quality is expected to increase market value. Thailand is pushing ahead with the plan to file for more geographical indication (GI) certifications for indigenous products, aiming to create added value on local products. Among all IP protection, GI is one of the most suitable IP tools for Thailand as it improves economic strength, raising income in remote regions and help rural development in sustainable way.

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1. Border economic zone development going on at steady pace: NESDC

(From www.nationthailand.com June 4, 2020)

Bangkok – The National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) unveiled the progress in the development of special economic development zones in 10 border areas across the country. Over the five years, the value of investment in this zone amounted to Bt24.699 billion. There are 4,223 businesses with total registered capital of Bt8.409 billion. Most of them are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). There were also requests for investment promotion from the Board of Investment (BOI) for another 75 projects totaling Bt11.043 billion. Basic infrastructure development is on average about 70 per cent complete and key projects will be gradually completed by 2022.

2. Ang Thong drum set to get GI mark

(From Bangkok Post, June 5, 2020)

Bangkok – The Geographical Indication (GI) registration process for Ang Thong’s traditional drum is set to be completed this year. Although people in tambon Ekkarat in Pa Mok district inherited their traditional singing skills, the Ekkarat drums required special crafting skills as well as a particular wood, rain trees, and special cow leather to make. The number of Thai indigenous products with GI registration raised to 124 products in 76 provinces, leaving only Ang Thong province. Being promoted as a living museum, the drum-making village was also selected as a model for the creative economy by the Commerce Ministry in 2011.

3. Industrial group supports Thailand joining CPTPP

(From Bangkok Post, June 10, 2020)

Bangkok – The Joint Standing Committee on Commerce, Industry and Banking (JSCCIB) supports the move to make Thailand a member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) to boost the nation’s international trade in the post-pandemic period. The Federation of Thai Industries (FTI) unveiled a study of the pact jointly conducted with the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. However, civic groups and non-governmental organization have raised concerns over negative effects on the nation’s food security and access to certain medicines. The study team discussed these issues with some opponent groups, but could not get clear reasons why Thailand should not join the agreement.

4. EU Nations sign vaccine deal with AstraZeneca

(From Bangkok Post, June 15, 2020)

Geneva – AstraZeneca Plc and four European Union countries said they reached an agreement to distribute a coronavirus vaccine. The Netherlands, Germany, France and Italy concluded a contract with the UK drugmaker to provide 300 million to 400 million doses of a possible vaccine starting from the end of 2020. The deal marks the first concrete result for the four-nation alliance. They are working in parallel with the European Commission, the 27-nation EU. AstraZeneca is seeking to expand manufacturing capacity of the vaccine developed with Oxford University and is open to collaborating with other businesses. The governments agree to help cover development and manufacturing.

5. Joining Trans-Pacific group' will have no impact on Compulsory Licensing of drugs'

(From www.nationthailand.com, June 22, 2020)

Bangkok – The Department of Intellectual Property has eased public concerns about Thailand losing the right to Compulsory Licensing (CL) of drugs if it joins the CPTPP. “The pact does not prohibit the use of drug CL or has any regulations that will force Thailand to extend the protection period of drug CL or allow the monopoly of drug tests,” the department said. It will comply with the regulations of World Trade Organization (WTO) that focuses on the use for non-commercial purposes or to remedy emergency situations, the department added. The 11 members decided to revoke the two issues and Thailand will not be forced to extend drug CL or allow the monopoly of drug tests under CPTPP.

6. Ha Noi must become East Asian centre by 2045: PM

(From www.nationthailand.com, June 29, 2020)

Ha Noi – Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc made the remark at ‘Ha Noi 2020 – Investment and Development Co-operation’ conference that aimed to promote post-Covid-19 economy recovery and development. Vietnam has its gross regional domestic product growth 1.3 times faster than the whole country’s gross domestic product expansion, and the budget revenue target of VND285 trillion this year. Its target was no longer to compete with other Vietnamese localities but with other cities in the region like Bangkok, Jakarta, Shanghai and Manila, said PM Phuc. Local per capital income has approximated \$5,500 each year. Despite the severe impacts of COVID-19, the gross regional domestic product (GRDP) of Ha Noi grew by 3.39 per cent with 12,650 newly registered enterprises in the first half of 2020.

7. Thai FDA preparing to register vaccine as two research teams race ahead

(From www.nationthailand.com, June 30, 2020)

Bangkok – The Thai Food and Drug Administration is preparing to register any Covid-19 vaccines that are successfully developed in the country. The World Health Organization (WHO) is monitoring a total of 142 coronavirus vaccine research programs worldwide, six of which are being conducted in Thailand. The most advanced vaccine programs are at Chulalongkorn University (mRNA prototype vaccine) and BioNet-Asia (DNA prototype vaccine). Both prototypes have been tested successfully on animals and are now set to be tested in humans. A Thai Covid-19 vaccine may be available by early next year, Health Minister reported last week.

8. R&D spending poised to drop to B166bn in 2020

(From Bangkok Post, Thailand, June 30, 2020)

Thailand – Thailand’s R&D spending is expected to drop to 166 billion baht, or 1.09% of GDP, says the Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council (NXPO). The pandemic is affecting private sector investment in R&D, decreasing total R&D spending in the country. However, he expects R&D spending to recover in 2021 and reach 1.23% of GDP, still lower than the previous projection of 1.5% before the pandemic took hold. The agency believes R&D spending will reach the goal of 2% of GDP by 2027. Research projects pushed by the National Science and Technology development agency include smart farmers, food with functional ingredients, ethanol fuel cells for vehicle applications and food waste reduction through supply chain in plants and animals.

9. Govt takes steps to stop ‘bio-piracy’

(From Bangkok Post, Thailand, July 13, 2020)

Thailand – The Department of Intellectual Property is pushing ahead with amendments to the Patent Act aimed at preventing theft of traditional knowledge or bio-piracy. The draft amendment will introduce mandatory profit-sharing for commercial use of traditional knowledge through patents. Jittima Sirithaporn, deputy director-general, said a business seeking to patent innovations involving traditional knowledge governing products such as herbs will be required to share any profits made from folk wisdom. The amendments will also address issues involving compulsory licencing to come into line with the Trips Agreement governs by World Trade Organization members.

10. Agricultural startups to be mentored on using innovation to generate higher value

(From www.nationthailand.com Thailand, July 13, 2020)

Thailand – The National Innovation Agency (NIA) and 12 private partners is launching a campaign to promote startup agricultural entrepreneurs to use innovation for boosting product prices instead of relying on government aid. The ‘Inno4Farmers’ campaign to bring modern technology and innovation to improve the farming and manufacturing process of agriculturists. In the pilot stage, NIA will select 10 candidates from agricultural startups who demonstrate a business plan to join the mentoring sessions provided by partners. “The successful enterprises will generate more jobs and business opportunities in the agricultural supply chain” NIA director Panart Chairat said.