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### **Editorial**

The ministry of commerce reiterated that joining the Agreement for Trans-pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is a must as it would boost the country economic performance and draw in potential investors. However, during the recent seminar which was organized by National Commission on International Trade and Health Studies (NCITHS), the biggest concern of access to affordable medicines and patent issues remains high barriers. Although, the representative from the Department of Intellectual property Thailand has clearly affirmed that compulsory licensing of medicines under TRIPS Agreement would be still applicable.

With hope that the pact might offer a broader economic opportunity and ability to compete with our rising neighbors. Thailand should draw lessons from the experiences of Vietnam and Malaysia. These countries had similar concerns before joining the CPTPP but they decided to take risks and have been succeed with economy's integration and attracted foreign investment.

As a matter of fact, the government who holds most of the information about the CPTPP should make more attempts to educate the public and shape their opinion. The Ministry of Commerce, who have direct responsibility in dealing with the CPTPP issue should demonstrate the brighter side of the trade deal and must be proactive in communicating with public. It must not rely on and old-fashioned communication approach in order to bridge the gap between itself and the public. Apart from the strategic opportunity, the most important is the CPTPP could be one of cures to solve the economy's damage caused by Covid-19 for our country.

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#### **1. CPTPP could lead to 'soaring' health costs**

*(From Bangkok Post, July 18, 2020)*

**Bangkok** – The study of “CPTPP Impact on Access to Medicines” by the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Chulalongkorn University, is studying two issues of the 30-year impacts of the CPTPP. The first is about patent linkage. The second being the impact on state hospital procurement of medicines. It noted that the Government Pharmaceutical Organization (GPO) has produced many generic drugs that helped to provide affordable medicines to patients. Under the CPTPP, it will require two years or more before the GPO

can apply CL to drugs and open the doors to legal disputes. The pact also requires Thailand to cancel a policy that state hospitals to purchase cheaper generic drugs from the GPO unless they are out of stock. The drug costs will rise by 107.9 billion baht over the next 30 years, while imported drugs will rise to 85% compared with 76% without the CPTPP.

## **2. OTCC gains direct authority on fair trade**

*(From Bangkok Post, August 11, 2020)*

**Bangkok** – Thailand’s Trade Competition Commission vows to tighten its role in curbing monopolies and ensuring fair trade competition in the country. The Office of Trade Competition Commission (OTCC) said enforcement of the new Trade Competition Act of 2017 allows the commission to become an independent body, with sufficient tools to handle unfair trade practices or abusive competition activities and deliver penalties. Previously the regulator was required to pass a recommendation to the public prosecutor, who would consider whether to take up the case. The commission is empowered to impose substantial administrative and criminal penalties and oversee mergers and acquisitions (M&A). For mergers, companies are required to seek permission from the OTCC otherwise they will face penalties up to 200,000 baht, and 10,000 baht per day as long as the violation is carried out.

## **3. BoI events aim for 4,000 pairings**

*(From Bangkok Post, August 12, 2020)*

**Bangkok** – The Board of Investment (BoI) expects to help 4,000 Thai and foreign companies form business partnerships through international events because of the impact of Covid-19. The 2020 business matching is projected to create economic value worth 7 billion baht. BoI and the Thai Subcon Association will co-organize Subcon Thailand, Asean’s largest international industrial subcontracting in Bangkok. The events will exhibit with a mix of online digital technology in “new normal industries”. Foreign companies from countries such as France, China, Japan, Germany and Taiwan are interested in joining the events to seek new business opportunities in aerospace, medical device and electric vehicle sectors.

## **4. Trade department to push for RCEP signing in October**

*(From Bangkok Post, August 13, 2020)*

**Bangkok** – The Department of Trade Negotiations will urge the Cabinet to consider signing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) pact. It can be signed during the Asean Summit in November held in Vietnam. After signing, the agreement is expected to come into force by mid next year. RCEP cover 16 countries – the 10 members of Asean plus

the six countries that the grouping has free trade agreement (FTA)s, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand. The department was educating Thai farmers and business owners on how they can benefit from the agreement. The Commerce Ministry is also studying plans to set up a fund to compensate parties affected by Thailand's FTAs with foreign countries or free-trade blocs.

## **5. Accelerating Thailand's Bioeconomy**

*(From [www.nationthailand.com](http://www.nationthailand.com), August 17, 2020)*

**Bangkok** – Thailand is accelerating large investment projects and biochemicals to make use of agricultural raw materials and Internet of Things technology to enhance productivity of farm sector. The Ministry of Industry and the Eastern Economic Corridor Office are pushing forward the private sector's development of US\$-1 billion "Bio Hub" complex in Chachoengsao Province. The complex will house a US\$-0.4 billion biofuel and biochemical facilities for the new generation of biochemical products and biodiesel B100. The government plans to expand the investment for bioeconomy to other parts of the country, including the lower northeastern region to use of vast plantations of cassava and sugarcanes.

## **6. Medical cannabis industry gears up to drive Thai economy**

*(From [www.nationthailand.com](http://www.nationthailand.com), August 24, 2020)*

**Bangkok** – Medical cannabis will be raised to the status of an economic crop in country and exported across the world. Thai farmers should also have access to both certified commercial cannabis seed and be able to generate their own seed stocks. The government panel will promote Thai medical cannabis in the Asian, European and US markets. Large areas of Thailand are suitable for cultivation of medical cannabis, but the country has only four cannabis cultivars (RPF1-4) and needs to develop more varieties to support industrial production. The Government Pharmaceutical Organization is collaborating with an enterprise on a pilot contract farming project to grow high-CBD medical marijuana and build a network of community producers.

## **7. Nissan picks Thailand for its only production base in Asean**

*(From [www.nationthailand.com](http://www.nationthailand.com), August 24, 2020)*

**Bangkok** – Automaker Nissan has closed its factory in Indonesia and plans to make Thailand its lone manufacturing base in Asean with a long-term business plan. The plan includes both of hybrid car manufacturing and electric cars, approved by the Board of Investment. To support the production of electric cars in Thailand, the Ministry of Industry has reassured on car procurement for executives in government agencies and state enterprises. Other measures

are benefits for people who buy electric vehicles which will be discussed and pushed under the National Electric Vehicle Policy Committee to enable Thailand to achieve its goal of becoming the world's major electric vehicle production base.

## **8. Smart Park being propelled ahead**

*(From Bangkok Post, Thailand, August 25, 2020)*

**Thailand** – Industry Ministry plans to ask the cabinet to approve a 12-billion-baht Smart Park industrial estate. The new complex located on 1,383 rai in Rayong province, will be among key projects in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) scheme to serve 12 targets S-curve industries, including next-generation cars, robotics, medical technology as well as aviation and aerospace. The government is ambitious to build a high-tech industrial hub spanning 30,000 rai in three provinces: Chon Buri, Rayong and Chachoengsao. The project is set to start in the second quarter next year and expected to complete within three years.

## **9. Moderna failed to disclose federal support in vaccine patents, researchers say**

*(From [www.nationthailand.com](http://www.nationthailand.com) Thailand, August 29, 2020)*

**Thailand** – Moderna, the Massachusetts biotech company, has failed to disclose government financial support in any of the 125 patents it has filed in its 10-year history, in violation of federal law. It got nearly \$1 billion in research and development money from the Trump administration. It was also supported with grants of about \$25 million by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), reported by Knowledge Ecology International (KEI), a nonprofit group that protect taxpayer investments in patents. To list of government support in any patent is required in the 1980 Bayh-Dole Act, KEI said. However, Moderna has disclosed its government funding to investors, in its filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, including the registration for its record-setting 2018 initial public offering, and some scientific papers.

## **10. EECi biorefinery project almost 50% complete**

*(From [www.nationthailand.com](http://www.nationthailand.com), Thailand, September 9, 2020)*

**Thailand** – The Eastern Economic Corridor of Innovation (EECi) project is 45 per cent complete and will be ready for operation by June 2021. The project area will cover 3,454 rai in Rayong province. In the first phase, it will focus on establishing model biorefineries that will turn agricultural produce and leftovers into biofuel and bio-plastic palettes, and important raw material for many bioproducts. This will help reduce reliance on petrochemical materials and reduce the environmental impact due to the increasing use of bioproducts.

The EECi's model biorefineries are developed under cooperation with a partner in Belgium, and expected to be operational by March-May 2021.