

PRESS RELEASE

Thai Private Sector Hosts ABIS 2019 under the Theme “Empowering ASEAN 4.0” Preparing ASEAN for the Rise of Digital Economy

2 November 2019 - The ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC), in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand, and the Joint Standing Committee on Commerce, Industry and Banking (JSCCIB) comprising of the Board of Trade of Thailand, the Federation of Thai Industries, and the Thai Bankers' Association, organize the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit 2019 or ABIS 2019 from November 2 to 3, 2019 at IMPACT Exhibition Center, Muang Thong Thani. The ABIS is annually organized in conjunction with the ASEAN Summit. This year, over 1,200 head of governments, business leaders and international organization leaders have interested in joining the event.

Prime Minister of Thailand, General Prayuth Chan-o-cha said, “I am very honored to be a part of today's event, the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit 2019, which is hosted by the ASEAN-Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and the Ministry of Commerce with the support of the Thai private sector including the Federation of Thai Industries, Thai Chamber of Commerce, and the Thai Banker's Association. “Empowering ASEAN 4.0” is the theme of ABIS 2019 as the event aims to find solutions and to equip people with the essential knowledge as well as to pave way for concrete actions in the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) era.

The Thai government has pushed forth the Thailand 4.0 policy with the aim to transform the Thai economy into one that can cope with the onset of the 4IR. This involves transforming the Thai economy into a digital economy using the “new” business model which combines online and offline business. Thailand has already begun its digital transformation to improve the country's macroeconomic and microeconomic activities.

Thailand's development involving public and private partnerships. On the security front, consultation with the private sector has been arrived at and there are shared concerns regarding non-traditional security issues including human security, energy security, and food security. On the economic front, the private and public partnership or PPP is the key mechanism in Thailand's economic development. The promotion of the Eastern Economic Corridor or EEC and its megaprojects, on the social front, Thailand is becoming an ageing society. This change in demography also offers an opportunity for the development and adoption of innovative technologies.

To enhance regional digital connectivity, Thailand looks toward regional economic cooperation frameworks namely ACMECS, RCEP, and GMS as well as free trade agreements such as RCEP. Multimodal connectivity between countries and key economic zones in Asia-Pacific via land, sea, or air should be the basis of cooperation in the region and especially among ASEAN Member States, Dialogue Partners, and Strategic Partners.

“I sincerely hope that our discussion will lead to valuable exchange of views and knowledge on the topic of ASEAN 4.0, global supply chain, access to financing of SMEs, and the development of ASEAN’s human capital. The outcome of ABIS 2019 will help ASEAN effectively cope with the rapidly changing technological and economic environment.” Gen Prayuth said

Chairman of the ASEAN-BAC, Mr. Arin Jira said that the private sector has played a vital role in driving forward ASEAN economies. The ASEAN Business and Investment Summit 2019 or ABIS 2019 serves as a platform to promote the development of ASEAN economies in the midst of new challenges, while demonstrating further cooperation in the region and the potential of the ASEAN region as an outstanding trading and investment hub.

Organized under the theme “Empowering ASEAN 4.0”, the objective of the summit is to prepare the country members to cope with new challenges in the digital era. This is in line with the key idea of the ASEAN-BAC, who has been supporting and promoting the implementation of four key pillars in the ASEAN Community in 2019: 1) Digital Infrastructure, which focuses on the development of technology infrastructure; 2) Digital Connectivity, which focuses on creating digital connectivity to support trade and investment in the ASEAN region; 3) Human Empowerment and Development, which focuses on reskilling and upskilling the workforce and easing unemployment problems in the ASEAN region; and 4) MSME, aims at helping MSME entrepreneurs gain access to innovation and capital to improve their competitiveness.

“ASEAN 4.0 could be seen equally as an opportunity and challenge, in which every sector, especially the business sector, must recognize the coming changes and adjust themselves as digital technology is playing a larger role and creating impact faster than we have ever seen before. For example, low-skilled workers are being replaced by robots and automation, while AI is replacing jobs in the service sector in ASEAN countries. In this summit, we want to raise awareness for ASEAN country members in order to prepare themselves to cope with the disruptive technology, and create the utmost benefit for ASEAN people and the ASEAN community,” Mr. Arin said.

The ABIS 2019 hosted by Thailand have received attendance confirmation from high-ranking executives from international organization including the WEF and OECD, while leaders of ASEAN countries and leading

enterprises will share their ASEAN vision in the summit including AirAsia, Grab, Huawei, Toyota Motor, Singapore Telecommunications, SCG, Bangkok Bank, Shell Thailand, Mitsubishi, UFJ Financial Group, Ant Financial Services Group, among other leading companies.

The summit will also welcome keynote speakers who will elaborate on the social and economic impact caused by digital disruption and share their views on different aspects for the transition into ASEAN digital economy. For example, JETRO Chairman and CEO Mr. Nobuhiko Sasaki will share his view on trade and investment connectivity in the digital era; Huawei Technologies Vice President Mr. Edward Zhou, the key person responsible for Huawei's international market expansion, will share his view on the transition into digital economy and how to create digital connectivity in ASEAN. Moreover, the summit will welcome a special guest speaker, 13 year-old coding genius Femi Owolade-Coombes, also known as Hackerfemo, who is diagnosed with Tourette syndrome who is passionate about coding and is using digital technology to change the world by raising funds to help underprivileged children gain access to digital technology.

During the two-day ABIS 2019, there will be seminars on challenges for ASEAN 4.0 in six key topics: 1) Advancing ASEAN 4.0 in Global Value Chain, 2) Sustainable ASEAN 4.0: Circular Economy, 3) Next Generation MSME Access to Finance, 4) ASEAN Digital Transformation and Connectivity, 5) ASEAN Human Empowerment and Development, and 6) ASEAN Mentorship for Entrepreneurs Network for MSMEs.

The Thai Bankers' Association Chairman, Mr. Predee Daochai said that leaders in the public and private sectors will attend the summit to share their views on economic and social issues and other challenges present in ASEAN member states. At the ABIS, the finance and banking sector will address the challenges of next generation MSMEs access to financing, which is one of the most challenging issues for MSME due to the current funding constraints that are impeding their long-term growth and business development.

The key strategies to cope with these problems are to strengthen the financial system in the region and to enable MSMEs to gain access to financial services and credit facilities. The advancement in technology and digitization of the financial mechanism in the 4IR have also facilitated MSMEs' access to financial transactions at lower costs. Moreover, financial institutes are embracing the Information Base Lending concept which is driven by digitization and technology transformation, resulting in new forms of credit and creditors by the uses of AI and Big Data, and the rise of alternative financing tools like crowdfunding and P2P.

"These innovative financial services will enable ASEAN MSMEs to gain access to financing and effectively prepare themselves for the next era. Meanwhile, the new opportunities arising from the digital transformation and digital connectivity will leapfrog trade growth in the ASEAN region," Mr.Predee said.

In addition, the ABIS 2019 will also provide parallel activities to create further opportunities and enhance the capability of businesses in the ASEAN region including exhibitions, business matching activities, and meetings between public and private sectors. Moreover, the ASEAN Business Award 2019 (ABA) will be organized on the evening of November 2, 2019. Eleven awards in the category of the Most Admired ASEAN Enterprise will be granted to home-grown ASEAN companies and ASEAN SMEs who are able to compete in the international market successfully and play a vital role in supporting sustainable growth for the ASEAN economy.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.aseanbac2019.org>.

Vice Chairman, Board of Trade of Thailand and Chairman of ASEAN Business Awards (ABA) 2019,

Mr. Phairush Burapachaisri said the objective of ABA 2019 is to support the business sector and recognize ASEAN enterprises with outstanding potential in various fields as well as promote SMEs to become leading companies and compete in the global stage, which is an important mechanism to strengthen the ASEAN Economic Community or the AEC.

“We hope that the award will become an example of best practices for companies which will help other players learn about the award-winning business operations and enable others to expand their businesses in ASEAN countries. If private companies, especially ASEAN SMEs are strong and support and complement each other, it will reinforce sustainable economic growth in the region,” said Mr. Phairush