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Thailand BOI, University Network to spur R&D linkage with industry

August 21, 2019 | News

In order to foster innovation and boost the country's competitiveness



The Thailand Board of Investment (BOI) has entered into an agreement with eight of the country's leading universities aiming to improve linkage between the academic and manufacturing sectors in the fields of research as well as human capital development, in order to foster innovation and boost the country's competitiveness, the BOI said.

The memorandum of understanding signed with Thailand's Research University Network (RUN), a higher education alliance set up in 2015, covers knowledge and information sharing in the area of research and development between RUN member universities and industrial operators. The agreement will stimulate collaboration in private sector demand-driven R&D activities, co-operative education programs and high-skilled workforce recruitment, the BOI said.

The RUN alliance was set up by four institutions located in Bangkok, namely Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart University, Thammasat University, Mahidol University, and another four located in major provincial cities, namely Chiang Mai University, Khon Kaen University, Prince of Songkla University and Naresuan University.

"This agreement reinforces the BOI's facilitation role in fostering cooperation between business and academics to increase research and development in Thailand and to strengthen our manufacturers' competitiveness in key technologies," said Ms Duangjai Asawachintachit, Secretary-General of the BOI. "With the support of RUN, we can now draw on a large pool of expertise and knowledge to develop and commercialize new products and services, for the benefit of investors and the economy at large."

Overall R&D expenditures are on the rise in Thailand and have doubled to 1% of GDP in the five years to 2017, according to the Office of the National Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation Policy Council. Thailand is targeting a further increase to 1.5% by 2021, as part of the Government's Thailand 4.0 policy which aims to drive economic growth through innovation.

Under the agreement, the BOI will also facilitate the universities' own talent recruitment needs and academic development by providing Smart Visas to foreign lecturers and researchers in the target areas, allowing qualified applicants and their

families to work and stay for renewable periods of up to four years, it said.

RUN coordinates research in its member universities by combining knowledge and sharing resources. Researchers in the network coordinate their work around 10 research "clusters", including climate change, logistics, advanced materials, robotics, agriculture, energy, digital technologies, health and functional food.

The alliance has collaboration agreements with several international partners such as New Zealand's MacDiarmid Institute for Advanced Materials and Nanotechnology, Japan's Keio University, and Malaysia's Research University Network