

THAILAND HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE AN AVIATION HUB IN THE REGION THANKS TO ITS GEOGRAPHIC ADVANTAGE, SO THERE IS GROWING DEMAND FOR AVIATION PROFESSIONALS IN THE COUNTRY AND ASEAN. RECENTLY, UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS MET WITH AIR CHIEF MARSHAL PRAJIN JANTHONG, HEAD OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS FOR THE MILITARY LEADERS, TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE COOPERATION WITH THE AIR FORCE TO ENHANCE AVIATION TRAINING. PRAJIN HAS ORDERED A JOINT WORKING GROUP BE SET UP TO CONSIDER THE PROJECT.

# Rajamangala University changes focus to match the labour market

AIMS AT CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY, PLUS PLANE MAINTENANCE WITH GERMAN FIRM

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THE NATION

RAJAMANGALA UNIVERSITY of Technology Krungthep has switched its focus from vocational education to creative technology in an effort to cultivate a workforce capable of economic development and meeting tough challenges in a labour market that will be affected by the Asean Economic Community.

President Satit Phudhachaiyong told *The Nation* last week the university started preparing in 2010 with a training course for 600 teachers in order to reposition itself.

A Bt600-million creative technology building is being built and due for completion in three years.

"We changed the strategic plan with an emphasis on creative technology education to comply with the future needs of the workforce and manpower," he said.

According to the National Economic, Social and Development Board, the five rising production industries are clean energy, health products (supplements, cosmetics, herbal drugs and traditional drugs), bio-plastics and bio-materials, aviation and creative technology (design, fashion, jewellery, advertising and architecture).

The rising service industries are tourism, retail/wholesale, con-

struction, communications and health services.

The university has formed a eight-year partnership with Aero-Bildung of Germany to develop a Bt220 million aviation maintenance training centre.

Based on Part 147 and Part 66 of the aviation training standard of the European Aviation Safety Agency (Easa), this year the university will kick off the first phase for instructor qualification, while the second and third phases are to send engineering teachers to take courses in Germany from 2014-16.

The third phase is a performance evaluation of the project, as the final phase for direct approval is scheduled to be effective in 2022.

Thailand has the potential to be an aviation hub in the region thanks to its geographic advantage, so there is growing demand for aviation professionals in the country and Asean.

Recently, university officials met with Air Chief Marshal Prajin Janthong, head of economic affairs for the National Council for Peace and Order, to discuss possible cooperation with the Air Force to enhance aviation training. Prajin has ordered a joint working group be set up to consider the project.

Applications for the aviation programme will open for the first time next year with a maximum of 25 students who completed the diploma level. The students will take a two-year course to earn an Easa professional certificate.

Aero-Bildung is an international company dealing primarily with the education and training of young people and adults. It is recognised by the Federal Aviation Authority. Aero-Bildung provides

basic knowledge training and examinations for all Easa licences.

The university joined with the Halal Science Centre at Chulalongkorn University two years ago to offer a halal processing food programme under the Home Economics Faculty. The university aims to create a Thai-style halal food programme.

Thailand's halal food business plays a vital role in the economy with annual exports topping US\$5 billion (Bt160 billion). Thailand exports to 57 member countries of the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation and is the world's fifth largest exporter.

A critical issue affecting the country's economic development and competitiveness is the mismatch between graduate supply and demand. Another challenge is shifting the enrolment ratio of students studying in the general stream to the vocational stream. Now 60 per cent of students opt for general education and only 40 per cent for vocational education.

Most graduates in the 2014 academic year studied in fields that don't fit demands of the economy and local employers. Entrepreneurs require workers with technical certificates, but there is a low supply in the market.

In fact, most students with a professional certificate continue their studies at a higher professional level. Only 25 per cent enter the labour market, while 50 per cent of students with a higher level of professional certificate go on to study at the bachelor level, Satit said.



This aircraft repair training centre is a collaboration between Universiti Kuala Lumpur Malaysian Institute of Aviation Technology and Aero-Bildung of Germany.