

## PM urges Thais to tap AEC benefits

PRIME MINISTER [Prayut](#) Chan-o-cha has called on Thais to be alert for change and the new opportunities that will come to Thailand and other [Asean](#) countries now that the [Asean](#) Economic Community has officially begun.

Government Spokesman Maj-General Sansern Kaewkamnerd said [Prayut](#) wanted Thais to seek more knowledge and self-development in order to benefit their career paths and the country's competitiveness.

The prime minister was speaking after Thailand and the other [Asean](#) countries officially entered the [AEC](#) on Thursday.

The other [Asean](#) countries are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam.

"The prime minister emphasised the development of English skills among Thai people, particularly communication skills," the spokesman said.

Sansern said the government would help by intensifying skill development among the labour force so the country could better compete with neighbouring countries as well as attract foreign investment by using its market capability and seek more cooperation within the [Asean](#) grouping. He said the government had issued strategies on six aspects in response to the [Asean](#) community that covered the development of education, labour and information technology and building a regional network.

"A good example of the capability of contesting at the international level is Phuket, which was selected, together with 17 others cities, by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, or Unesco, as a City of Gastronomy. Phuket is the only [Asean](#) city selected for such an honour," he said.

Unesco recognised the island's rich culinary history and unique cuisine and has allowed the city to use Unesco's logo to promote its gastronomic products.

"Being chosen as a member of the Unesco Creative Cities Network as a City of Gastronomy is a wonderful honour for Phuket," said Unesco director general Irina Bokova.

Efforts to collate recipes and the historical information of the local Baba (Straits Chinese) cuisine to have Phuket Town recognised as a City of Gastronomy have been ongoing since 2011.

Sansern said the designation gave the resort province an opportunity to boost its economy.

He said [Prayut](#) welcomed the news and thanked the provincial authorities for their hard work.

He said the prime minister wanted government authorities to work collectively and effectively like the Phuket authorities did.

[Prayut](#) also wanted to see a long-term plan that emphasised concrete success and was based on benefiting the public including from participating in the AEC.

The full implementation of the [AEC](#) is seen as a major milestone in Asean's regional economic-integration

agenda as it offers opportunities in the form of a huge combined market of US\$2.6 trillion (Bt96 trillion) and a combined population of 622 million.

In 2014, [Asean](#) was collectively the third-largest economy in Asia and the seventh-largest in the world.

The [AEC](#) initiative rests on four pillars - integrate the region into a single market and production base; turn Southeast Asia into a highly competitive region; ensure equitable development across Asean; and fully integrate [Asean](#) into the global economy.