

# Robinson eyes Asian branches

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Robinson Department Store Plc aims to open branches in other Asian countries over the next two or three years.

President Preecha Ekkunagul says the company is considering investing in China, India and Indonesia.

A clear plan about international business expansion will be announced next year. After that, the first store will open in a year or two.

"We're confident we can spread our wings and compete in the international arena because we have good knowledge about product merchandising and logistics," Mr Preecha said. "Our concerns now are about investment and trade conditions in the countries we want to enter."

Robinson sees the formation of the Asean Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 as a benefit to local and global expansion, making it easier to move products around the region.

"That means there is room to open



**Preecha: Confident about products**

will be reviewed.

This year it will spend 2.5 billion baht to open five outlets. They include stores in Suphan Buri province, scheduled to open Friday; Bang Na (in May); Bang Khae (August); Surat Thani (November); and Lampang (December).

An additional 300 million baht will go to renovating the eight existing stores nationwide. Major facelifts will occur in Rangsit, Chiang Mai and Udon Thani, with minor renovations at the remaining five stores in Bangkok's Sukhumvit and

more department stores in Thailand," Mr Preecha said. "The market will be saturated when we have outlets in all provinces."

Robinson will add five new stores a year for five years. After that, its expansion speed

Srinakarin areas and Phuket.

The company is in talks with a landlord to renew the lease for Robinson Department Store's Bang Rak branch. It just extended the lease for Robinson Ratchadapisek for another year to May 31, 2013.

Mr Preecha expressed optimism for 2012 because the government plans lots of spending on infrastructure, transport and hikes in civil servant salaries, indicating more local consumption.

Robinson's sales last year rose 19% to 17.63 billion baht, fuelling a 30% surge in net profit to 1.45 billion baht. Same-store growth was 12%.

"Despite the floods, last year was the best year for Robinson in the past 10 years," the president said.

The company expects sales growth of 20% this year. It will spend 600 million baht on marketing with a focus on brand building.

Shares of ROBINS on the Stock Exchange of Thailand closed yesterday at 45.50 baht, down one baht, in trade worth 55.29 million baht.