

## Daily Thai News Updates: 15 May 2017

### 1. Somkid to lead ministerial delegation to Japan

Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))

Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak is scheduled to visit Japan on June 4-8 to monitor the progress of the economic cooperation between the two countries on rail, high-speed trains, the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), the government's 10 targeted industries and support to Thai small and medium-sized enterprises. According to the five-day itinerary, Mr Somkid and the Transport, Commerce, Industry, the Digital Economy and Society (DE) ministers, as well as members of the Board of Investment, will pay a courtesy call to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on June 5. A third meeting of the high-level joint commission will be also held on June 5 at Japan's Government House to discuss possible EEC partnership, human resource development, rail development, the improvement of Thai SMEs, as well as a development master plan for Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. Mr Somkid is also scheduled on the same day to witness the signing of three memorandums of understanding (MoUs) between the Industrial Promotion Department and Fukushima prefecture on SME development; the Federation of Thai Industries and Fukushima prefecture on the development of medical equipment; and the National Science and Technology Development Agency and the Medical Device Industry Promotion Agency on medical development.

### 2. Building hopes on EEC

Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))

The government's much-touted Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) is set to spur residential demand in the three eastern provinces where it will be located, driven by the expectation of new jobs and infrastructure development projects. Chon Buri deputy governor Pawat Lertmukda said the EEC, which is designated to cover a combined 30,000 rai in Chon Buri, Rayong and Chachoengsao provinces, will undeniably drive demand for housing units as there should be a large number of new jobs employed in the 10 targeted industries. The EEC is intended to be a special zone accommodating investment in 10 targeted industries promoted as clusters by the government. The 10 industries are next-generation cars; smart electronics; affluent medical and

wellness tourism; agriculture and biotechnology; food; robotics for industry; logistics and aviation; biofuels and biochemicals; digital; and medical services. The EEC is an enhancement of the Eastern Seaboard that has been the region's powerhouse for manufacturing and trade.

### **3. GDP expands 3.3% in Q1 YoY due to export boost**

**Source: The Nation ([Link](#))**

Gross domestic product grew 3.3 per cent year on year in the first quarter, said Poramettee Vimolsiri, secretary general of the National Economic and Social Development Board. GDP growth in the fourth quarter last year was 3 per cent and full-year growth in 2016 was 3.2 per cent, Poramettee said. Exports drove higher growth between January to March due to the segment starting to recover in line with the improving global economy, the secretary general said, adding that government spending also contributed to the expansion, growing 9.7 per cent in the first quarter. Consumer spending expanded 3.2 per cent in the first quarter year on year, largely due to rising farmer income, Poramettee said, although private investment decreased 1.1 per cent.

### **4. Two ministries to sign papers at China's Belt and Road Forum**

**Source: The Nation ([Link](#))**

The cabinet this week gave a green light for the Commerce and Industry ministries to sign trade and cooperation proposals at the two-day Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) in Beijing, which begins tomorrow. Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak said he believed China's "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) policy would benefit not only the Chinese economy but also those of participating countries. "One Belt One Road will be a new hope in a period when the world has been facing uncertainties, including US policy changes and Britain's exit" from the European Union, he said. Six Thai ministers with responsibilities ranging from transport, industry, commerce and science to digital economy and society have been assigned to attend the forum. At the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, two draft papers were approved for signing at the BRF. Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn will sign the first paper, "Initiative on Promoting Unimpeded Trade Cooperation along the Belt and Road", in order to express Thailand's position as an economic partner of China. The government sees this as an opportunity to express its vision concerning trade and economic connectivity and to promote Thailand's leading role to link China with the Greater Mekong Subregion countries and Asean. If there are any other issues

relating to trade and economic cooperation not already covered under existing agreements or contracts, the Commerce Ministry or other Thai representatives will be allowed to proceed without further Cabinet consideration.

#### **5. ASEAN members discuss ICT development cooperation**

**Source: The Nation ([Link](#))**

Some 110 delegates from Asean member states met on Tuesday in Vientiane to review progress and seek ways for future cooperation in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) development. The three-day meeting of the 2017 TELSOM-ATRC Joint Working Group and Related Meetings with Dialogue Partners taking place from May 9-11 is attended by the Deputy Director General of the Planning and Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Phavanhna Duangboupha, officials and Asean delegates. Officials are discussing related projects and plan to implement the Asean ICT Master Plan 2020. The purpose of the meeting is to review the ongoing TELSOM-ATRC activities for 2017 and discuss the 2018 work plan. One of the highlights of the meetings is to review the 2018 ICT project proposals from Asean member states, which includes the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications' projects. The meeting will also update cooperation progress with dialogue partners and discuss potential areas of cooperation in 2018. The Master Plan on Asean Connectivity 2025 consists of five strategic thrust: sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence, and people mobility. ICT is one of the key drivers in Asean, where the telecommunication and ICT sectors are developing rapidly. ICT contributes hugely to social and economic development in general, and all sectors of the economy are increasingly adopting and embedding ICT.

#### **6. Foreign films inject estimated Bt 900m into economy in Q1**

**Source: The Nation ([Link](#))**

Foreign film productions using Thailand as a setting totalled 239 in the first quarter and are forecast to pump Bt900 million into the economy, according to Wannasiri Morakul, director-general of the Tourism Department, Ministry of Tourism and Sport. She said most of the movies made in the country in the first quarter were Hollywood films, generating estimated income of Bt161 million, followed by UK films (Bt160 million). She said in the second half of the year Hollywood films using Thailand as a location are expected to generate over Bt620 million for the

economy due to tax incentives given to production houses because they promote the country. The department has targeted income from foreign films of Bt4 billion this year.

### **7. Roadblock for Dawei SEZ**

**Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))**

The Myanmar government will have to finance the proposed 134-kilometre road from the Thai-Myanmar border in Kanchanaburi to the Dawei special economic zone as there has been no private sector interest in the project, says Thailand's Neighbouring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (Neda). The government of Myanmar has yet to make a decision on the investment of the 4.5-billion-baht road but has signalled a positive direction, said Neda president Newin Sinsiri. The government should itself finance the construction as the private sector believes the project will offer low returns, he said. Even though the joint committee managing the Dawei special economic zone, better known as the Dawei board, has been set up, progress of the project has been made at a snail's pace. The project includes a deep-sea port, an industrial estate, a power plant, a tap water plant and roads connecting the Pacific and Indian oceans.

### **8. Visa seek to provide debit cards under local scheme**

**Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))**

The Bank of Thailand is considering Visa Thailand's application to provide debit cards under the local scheme, says senior director of onsite examination department Siritida Panomwon Na Ayudhya. If Visa wins the central bank's nod, the international payment network provider will become the third local card scheme service provider. The service will enable it to capitalise on the promising debit card payment market after the government's electronic data capture expansion plan under the national e-payment scheme is completed. Visa has offered payment network service in Thailand for 20 years through an international platform. There are around 30 million credit and debit cards bearing the Visa logo. Under central bank regulation, only those on a local card scheme can provide payment network service for debit cards issued and swiped in Thailand. Currently, there are two such providers -- Thai Payment Network Co (TPN), a joint venture between Bangkok Bank (BBL) and China's UnionPay International, and National Interbank Transaction Management and Exchange (National ITMX)