

Daily Thai News Summary: 2 August 2016

1. Baht hits one-year high against dollar

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

The baht hit a one-year high against the US dollar yesterday, tracking emerging-market currency strength as fading prospects of a US rate increase revved up investor appetite. TMB Analytics vice-president Jitipol Puksamatanan said the baht's passing of 34.76 against the greenback was a new high in a year, with capital inflows registering in domestic equities identified as the main source of the currency's appreciation together with Thai companies repatriating overseas dividends. Both Brexit and weaker-than-expected US economic readings are seen as the main causes of the strengthening baht as greater fund flows have shifted towards investment in emerging markets, he said.

2. CAT and IEAT to create digital innovation park

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

CAT Telecom has teamed with the Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand to develop a digital innovation park in eastern Thailand to promote the government's Thailand 4.0 policy. According to the plan, the park will be located at CAT's 600-rai (96 hectares) plot in Sri Racha, Chon Buri province . Currently, CAT's satellite earth station, submarine-cable landing station and data centre are located at the area. Yesterday CAT Telecom and the IEAT signed a memorandum of understanding to co-study the project for one year. The study will cover the park's design, planning and construction.

The park will be a centre of IT including for data, cloud computing and the Internet of things. After finishing the study, CAT plans to seek strategic investment partners. Veerapong Chaiperm, governor of IEAT, said that the park would be located in the eastern economic corridor that the government aimed to promote to serve 10 industrial clusters including automatives, petrochemical and medical to woo more foreign companies. Surapant Meknavin, acting CAT president, said that the project would support the government's Thailand 4.0 policy for start-ups. Thailand 4.0 relates to new-generation industries that rely on innovation. It is believed such industries will help drive the economy and help the country escape the middle-income trap.

3. Two Italian firms mull Thai production base

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

Italian chocolate maker Ferraro and agriculture truckmaker New Holland are considering opening production bases in Thailand following the formation last year of the Italian-Thai Business Forum. Central Group plans to open the 12th Italian branch of its La Rinascente department store in Rome next year. Isara Vongkusolkit, chairman of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, said yesterday that the 13 members of the new forum were leading companies from Italy such as Ducati, Italcementi, Ferraro and Pirelli and 17 companies from Thailand such as Thai Airways International, Bangkok Bank, Siam Cement, Charoen Pokphand, Central and Dusit International. The forum invited these leading companies to become members to help drive the economy. *"The new joint-forum will encourage more investment in both countries, from Italy to Thailand like automobiles, food, furniture and industrial design, and from Thailand to Italy like hotels, retail, food and tourism,"* he said.

To encourage investment here, the forum and chamber will provide training and exchange information with Italian companies. The forum would be the new channel for Thai entrepreneurs to enter the Europe Union for further investment, he added. Busaba Chirathivat, senior vice president of Central Retail and co-chairwoman of the forum, said the forum would help operators or members in Thailand find partners in Italy more easily than working with government bodies because executives and companies feel comfortable discussing and working together.

4. Thai attractions to be added to popular online game Pokemon GO

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

The Tourism and Sports Ministry is working with local representatives of Pokemon Go to add attractions in Thailand to the popular online game. The additions are expected to be launched in the final quarter of the year. The Tourism Ministry, in conjunction with the Information and Communication Technology Ministry, also plans to launch a new application to offer tourists personal mobile electronic guides next month in order to encourage them to explore attractions and surf for restaurants, hotels and shopping places.

The tourism authorities predict that the country will receive tourism revenue of Bt597 billion in the third quarter, a 10-per-cent increase from same three months last year. During the first seven months, Thailand received tourism income of Bt1.39 trillion, up 13.9 per cent from same period last year.

5. Somkid pushes high-speed rail, commercial development

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

Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak has sped up the construction of four high-speed railways, pushed for property development along their routes and pointed at the Bangkok-Rayong railroad as the pilot project. *"Many stations along the railroads have potential to develop commercially,"* he said after meeting yesterday with Transport Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith on drawing up a plan to make use of land along the rail lines. The move is part of the government's policy to drive the economy through investment along the East Economic Corridor. The three other lines are Bangkok-Nakhon Ratchasima, Bangkok-Hua Hin and Bangkok-Chiang Mai.

The Transport Ministry would study the return on investment of each project and the number of stations with potential for commercial development. *"We expect the study's results within two weeks before submitting it to the premier,"* he said. The Bangkok-Rayong high-speed railway project would be put on the agenda of the PPP (public private partnership) Policy Committee, he said. *"We know that what foreigners are watching is the investment in the Bangkok-Rayong high-speed railway, airport and seaport projects,"* he said. The faster these projects are materialised, the more economic growth will be driven. Conceptually, the government would not only avail of the surrounding areas of the railway projects, but also other infrastructure projects. The land to be developed would not only belong to the government, but also the private sector.

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