

Daily Thai News Updates: 7 August 2017

1. 'Without ASEAN, we are nothing'

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

Chutintorn Gongsakdi, Ambassador of Thailand to India, reflects on the first 50 years of Asean and the challenges of the future in a conversation with MK Aftab of Diplomatist magazine. Thailand is a founding member of Asean, together with several other cooperation frameworks. If anyone asked me, what is the end goal of all these frameworks, it would be to build a community. One area of cooperation always leads to another, contributing to community building. With Asean, it started from political cooperation. We had immediate political and security issues to address in our region and then the economic part came later. For all of today's frameworks, I think the end goal is integration and community building. This means that since we cannot stand alone in a globalised world, we need to make Southeast Asia a community where people can travel and work with relative freedom, in peace. When talking about Asean, we can point to the aspirational example of the European Union (EU). The EU remains a living laboratory for integration and continues to inspire us... Integration is an adjustment process. Integration requires structural reforms. However, economic nationalism is very much alive and well in today's world. This is a hindrance to integration. The private sector can also play a big role as their regional and global value chains determine the patterns of integration. The Japanese have had their economic footprint in Asean for a long time and their outward investment has contributed to Asean's regional economic integration... Other countries are attracted to the Asean Community because of the 620 million size of market, but they also wish to know the level of our commitment to the Asean Economic Community. On this, I think I can almost speak for all the 10 Asean member states. In any case, the answer for Thailand would be, without Asean, we are nothing. As ambassador of Thailand to India, I think that I would be able to command much less attention if we were not a member of Asean.

2. Asean to give infrastructure a big push

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

ASEAN governments are set to speed up implementation of large infrastructure projects by taking advantage of the fast growth in the region and the ample liquidity in the global financial market. Asean investors have become the largest investors in their own region, three times more than from Chinese investors, said Tony Cripps, chief executive officer of HSBC Singapore. According to Asean Investment Report 2016, Asean remained a major destination for global foreign direct investment (FDI), receiving around 16 per cent of the world FDI among developing economies with total inflows of US\$120 billion in 2015. Intra-Asean investment remained the largest source of FDI flows, rising to \$22.1 billion. The share of intra-Asean investment in total FDI flows to the region increased from 17 per cent in 2014 to 18.5 per cent in 2015. Japan ranked second with \$17.4 billion, followed by US \$12.2 billion and China \$ 8.2 billion. Cripps said that Singapore, as a financial hub of the region, had played a very active role in infrastructure financing; two-thirds of financing in recent years was estimated to be through the Singapore financial market. At the same time, bonds issued by Asean governments are attractive as they offer investors high yield compared to lower yields in the developed market, he said...In Thailand, the government has been promoting its flagship Eastern Economic Corridor project with investment in the next five years estimated to be Bt 1.5 trillion (\$43 billion). Asked whether funding is adequate for every country's ambitious plan, Suwit Rojanavanich, director-general of the Public Debt Management Office, said it would be no problem due to high liquidity in the global market as a result of the quantitative easing policy by central banks in developed economies and low interest rates. He said Thailand would not need much foreign capital as the government can borrow from the local market relatively cheap with Thailand's 10-year bond yield slightly over 2 per cent. Moreover, Thailand could extend funding to neighbouring countries such as Laos, he said. In addition to investment, Asean also wants to increase intra-Asean trade, which currently is about 25 per cent of total Asean trade, deemed to be relatively small. The region also wants to double bilateral trade between China and Asean to \$ 1 trillion by 2020 from around \$500 billion last year.

3. Asean labour ministers back Thailand's new migrant law

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

Labour Minister Sirichai Distakul joined Asean ministers to sign the CLMVT (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand) Joint Declaration on Safe Migration to strengthen regional efforts to end decades of illegal labour in five Southeast Asian nations. The pact formed at last week's ministerial meeting on labour affairs in Da Nang, Vietnam, affirms Thailand's neighbouring nations' support of the government's latest effort to crack down on illegal migrant workers, said Gen Sirichai after the three-day meeting that ended on Thursday. Labour ministers from the CLMVT countries agree that the safe and legal migration of foreign workers is possible if each government commits to legal procedures through bilateral agreements. Thailand is a popular destination for foreign workers, especially those from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. The Thai government's latest moves in migrant law are meant to bring the country's labour standards up to par with international standards. Among the new legal requirements involves hiring migrant workers under a memorandum of understanding forged between the workers' home country and Thailand.

4. Rice deal with Dhaka in the offing

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

Thailand is seeking to strengthen its trade relations with Bangladesh in the hope of exporting more rice to the South Asian country, according to Commerce Minister Apiradi Tantraporn. She said delegates will be in Dhaka on Aug 9-10 for the 4th Thailand-Bangladesh Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting. They are due to meet Bangladeshi Commerce Minister Tofial Ahmed, who is expected to raise several trade cooperation issues. "The discussion will be a good opportunity to upgrade our ties and could lead to a free-trade agreement (FTA) in the near future," said Ms Apiradi. Bangladesh is expected to discuss a proposal to buy Thai rice, and could ask to enter a long-term contract. Bangladesh was among Asian countries that approached Thailand to buy rice recently, after their food crops were damaged by bad weather over the past few years. It offered to buy around 200,000 tonnes of parboiled-grade Thai white rice for prompt shipment to serve strong demand at home. However, the deal has not yet be sealed since the countries are still discussing the price and delivery period...It is Thailand's third-biggest trade partner among South

Asian countries after India and Pakistan, with annual two-way trade with Thailand worth US\$30 billion (33 billion baht) last year, up 10.4% from the previous year.

5. Sattahip-Koh Chang ferry to launch in September

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

The new passenger ferry service between Sattahip district in Chon Buri and Koh Chang in Trat will be launched next month, according to the Marine Department. Director-general Sornsak Saensombat said the Sattahip-Koh Chang route will operate from Chuk Samet pier in Sattahip to the Bang Bao pier on Koh Chang, reports said. The service connecting two seaports on the eastern coast is expected to help limit the number of vehicles on the island. The service will be provided by Royal Passenger Liner, the operator of the Pattaya-Hua Hin ferry service. Mr Sornsak said the operator and the department were in the process of setting the fares. The service was originally to be launched in May.

6. Cyberinsurance demand surges with rise in attacks

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

As cyberattacks increase in frequency and severity, cyber issues are increasingly becoming more of a concern for companies that once felt they had relatively little exposure. The latest reports about the threats of the malicious ransomware known as NotPetya that crippled some computer facilities in several Western countries has driven home those concerns. Cyberinsurance was made available in the Thai insurance market in 2012, driven by the demand of corporate clients. FPG Insurance Thailand is one of the companies that have introduced cybersecurity insurance policies in Thailand, designed to protect businesses from a wide range of first-party and third-party liabilities from cyberexposure. According to Ms Suda, interest in cyberinsurance has surged significantly this year, as seen from mounting inquiries from potential customers and questions about expenses in cyberinsurance policies. Ms Suda said cyberinsurance policy is unique in that it offers protection for two parties: the insured (first party) and others who suffer from losses caused by cyberattacks (third party)... Apart from card-skimming, phishing is another key financial cyberfraud hurting individual consumers. Phishing uses fraudulent SMS messages and emails or fake websites to steal personal data, passwords, credit card numbers and other credentials. Text messages and emails are prime vectors for Trojan horses and spyware -- programmes that display

a message asking recipients to download an application to their computer or mobile phone. Once installed, spyware can steal information and make fraudulent transactions. Normally, banks do not ask customers to download any applications or software. If such an application is received, customers are advised to avoid downloading and immediately contact the bank.

7. Finance minister: strong baht temporary, no impact on trade

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

The strength of Thailand's baht, now at more than two-year highs against the US dollar, will be short-lived and will not affect exports in the second half of the year, the finance minister said on Monday. The baht has been driven by foreign investments in Thailand and the country's trade surplus, Apisak Tantivorawong told reporters. "Competitiveness is still fine at the moment. Exports in the second half should remain good as most exports are from large companies, which can still manage the currency," he said. He said he believed the central bank would ensure the baht doesn't appreciate sharply. The baht traded at 33.29 per US dollar on Monday, having rallied about 7.6% so far this year - the biggest gains so far by an Asian currency.