

Thai News Update: 12 July 2018

1. Somkid Calls For High-Speed Rail Action

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

Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak on July 10 urged state transport agencies to rush major projects into the bidding process, particularly the development of the double-track and high-speed train schemes. He said that the State Railways of Thailand (SRT) is the key driving engine this year to drive several projects and that its big project development should not be delayed. He also urged the SRT to hasten calls for bids in nine double-track routes. The SRT is expected to finish the term of reference of the Bangkok-Hua Hin high-speed train soon. Somkid also urged the SRT to conduct a study to extend this route to Surat Thani and present the plan of the extension route for Cabinet consideration next year. It is reportedly estimated that the projects Somkid urged the Transport Ministry to hasten their biddings this year are 13 schemes worth a combined Bt750 billion.

2. BRI Scheme A Boon For Airlines, China Eastern Executive Says

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

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has benefited the aviation industry as it is helping to boost the number of international travellers, said an executive of China Eastern Airlines, one of the three major state-owned air transport groups in the country. "We have found that more Chinese people are interested in travelling to countries along the Belt and Road, so it brings a dose of good news to every industry, including us [aviation industry]," Dong Bo, China Eastern's chief marketing officer, told The Nation during a recent visit to the airline's headquarters in Shanghai. Dong said that the BRI initiative will spur facilitating construction, more trade and investment flows, and more contact between the people of the countries along the Belt and Road. Chinese President Xi Jinping in late 2013 proposed the development strategy, which focuses on connectivity and cooperation between the countries of the Eurasian land mass and beyond with China, linked by the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and the ocean-going Maritime Silk Road.

3. Somkid Wants Bids Before Poll

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

Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak has ordered the Ministry of Transport to complete the auctions of all the ministry's planned transport projects before the general election tentatively scheduled for next February. The bids for transportation development projects need to be rolled out urgently before the end of this year, Mr Somkid told officials during his visit to the ministry on July 11. "Thailand must be a main hub among the CLMVT [Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand] countries, and this is why all these transport projects must be put up for bidding within seven to eight months before we [the current government] leave," Mr Somkid said. Mr Somkid pushed the ministry to press on with the bidding for the planned high-speed railway from Bangkok to Hua Hin in Prachuap Khiri Khan province, which forms part of the government's much-touted "Thailand Riviera" project.

4. Pantip Invests In E-Sports Event Venue

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

IT shopping mall Pantip Pratunam has collaborated with the public and private sectors to support the Thai e-sports industry, aiming to encourage the younger generation to become more competitive on the global stage. Veerarit Somboonsub, general manager of Asset World Estate, said Pantip Pratunam is hosting Pantip E-Sport Academy X U-League 2018 to encourage Thai students interested in e-sports to accelerate their gaming skills for further competition on the global stage. Mr Veerarit said Pantip Pratunam is widely acceptable and renowned gaming competition organiser in terms of staff and venue. Investing more in the upcoming event will help the shopping mall secure Thailand's reputation as a gaming hub.

5. VAT Return Scheme For Poor Shaping Up

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

The planned repayment of value-added tax (VAT) to government welfare smartcard holders is expected to take shape by the end of this year, a move meant to improve their purchasing power. The Finance Ministry is preparing to install a system to pay back consumption tax to the recipients of the government's welfare scheme, said Finance Minister Apisak Tantivorawong. When smartcard holders swipe their cards at shops with electronic data capture

terminals, the paid VAT will be returned to them at a later time, he said. The period over which the VAT is returned might run for a specific interval. The VAT return scheme is similar to a 15,000-baht shopping tax break given to individual taxpayers who purchased goods within a specific period over the past few years, he said. The government's welfare smart cardholders would get back the VAT once a year and the Finance Ministry will later set the ceiling for the VAT return after discussing the matter with related state agencies, he said.