

Thai News Update: 13 July 2018

1. Somkid Calls For High-Speed Rail Action

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

Thailand has called for South Korea investors to increase their investments in Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor and other areas, while indicating its readiness to serve as a gateway for South Korea businesses in this region. In a speech marking the 60th anniversary of Thailand-South Korea relations at a ceremony July 12, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak said he wants to see more foreign direct investments from South Korea, given its current share of just 3 per cent or about US\$500 million, in Thailand. Sontirat Sontijirawong, commerce minister, said that Thailand has tried to encourage South Korean investors to invest more in Thailand's EEC and other areas. "We want to expand trade cooperation with South Korea. The Ministry of Commerce will have to find ways for more cooperation in more product varieties, such as fruits, Somkid said. The two countries are currently cooperating only in some products, including electronics items, electrical appliances and rubber.

2. Exports Drive Growth In Smes' Share Of Economy

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

The country's ranks of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have enjoyed strong growth this year, aided in large measure by brisk demand for sales of products to elsewhere in Asia, Commerce Minister Sontirat Sontijirawong said on July 12. Sontirat said that the number of SMEs had reached more than 3 million in the first quarter of this year, with their gross domestic product (GDP) growing 6 per cent to Bt1.74 trillion – representing 42.8 per cent of the nation's GDP. It is evident that SMEs play a significant role in the domestic economy, Sontirat told a seminar titled Giving Wings to Thai SMEs to Fly Higher in the Global Market. "In today's rapidly changing business world, SMEs are facing stiffer competition, technological disruption and challenges," the minister said. The ministry has also received cooperation from the Department of International Trade Promotion's New Economy Academy and the International Chamber of Commerce in France to help increase SMEs' potential and enable the exchange of information on the rules and regulations on trade, policies and customs formalities.

3. Central Bank Steps In To Slow Baht Slide

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

The Bank of Thailand has moved to curb the baht's rapid retreat against the greenback as the local currency hit a nine-month low. The central bank has sporadically taken action against the currency's weakness by selling the US dollar to smooth out the baht's movement after it depreciated at a faster pace, lowering foreign reserves, said Bank of Thailand governor Veerathai Santiprabhob. He said the move is normal practice for the central bank. The Thai economy has adequate buffers to withstand any immediate challenges, with ample international reserves covering 3.5 times short-term external debts; low dependency on external borrowing; and current account surplus of around 8-9% of GDP, he said. Moreover, local banking sector is robust, with high capital adequacy ratio and stable domestic funding.

4. Thai Cave Rescue Site To Become A Museum

Source: The Hindu, Business Line ([Link](#))

Rescuers who pulled a young Thai football team from deep inside a flooded cave were dismantling their worksite on July 12, as plans emerged to turn the spot into a museum in tribute to the daring operation. At least one film production house was already working on a scheme to make a Hollywood treatment out of the heroics of divers, cavers and medics who risked their lives to free the “Wild Boars”. Workers were on July 12 packing up the industrial water pumps, heavy-grade machinery and construction equipment at the mouth of the Tham Luang cave, which had been a high-tech command centre during the 18-day ordeal. Rescue chief Narongsak Osottanakorn told reporters the site would ultimately be converted into a museum showcasing the clothes and equipment used during the dramatic rescue. The huge international interest in the story sparked immediate talk of books and films. Michael Scott, the managing partner of faith-based production house Pure Flix, said the company intends to pursue a film about the against-the-odds mission.