

Thai News Update: 15 June 2018

1. Renewable Energy Goal Raised To 30%

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

Renewable energy will account for 30 per cent of the country's electricity production within 15 years with no extra cost to the people, Energy Minister Siri Jirapongphan vowed on June 14. Siri, in announcing the target for green-sourced energy, said the drafting of a proposal for a 300-megawatt biomass project in the three southernmost provinces expedited for completion within two months before it is forwarded to the National Energy Policy Council (NEPC). The promotion of renewable energy is part of the government's policy to drive forward the economy. Currently, Thailand uses about 10 per cent of the country's electricity generation from renewable sources - ranging from solar cells and wind turbines to biomass and biogas - with total generation of 45,000 megawatts. Given what the government describes as a relatively competitive electricity cost, it has a policy to promote electricity generation of about 250-300 megawatts from a biomass project in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces. A facility in Yala will be the centre of the generation scheme as part of a plan to set up a regional electricity system that will be built around a smart grid system under a new unit, the Regional Power System (RPS).

2. New Office To Aid Budget Planning

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

An Integration office will be established to narrow the gap between planned and actual expenditure in government budgets, said Kobsak Pootrakul, the Minister to the Prime Minister's Office. Speaking at a Meet the Press-style event on June 14, Kobsak said the new unit will come under the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), which is undergoing a restructuring following the passage of the NESDB bill. The Integration office will work with the Budget Bureau on budget planning, aiming to narrow the gaps that frequently arises between the targeted and actual spending outlays. The drive for greater precision in planning is one of the key targets of national reforms and the 20-year national strategic plan. The fiscal 2019 budget will be the first to see the adoption of solutions to the problem and will involve Bt800 billion. Of the total, Bt500 billion will be spent on welfare, with the balance to be allocated according to government's agenda.

3. Thailand, Japan Team Up For Robotics

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

Thailand and Japan have entered into a joint agreement to form a consortium for the development of robotics specialists, with the aim of producing at least 1,400 people skilled in the field within three years. The consortium consists of the Industry Ministry, the Technology Promotion Association (Thailand-Japan), the Japan-Thailand Economic Cooperation Society, the Japan External Trade Organization (Jetro) Bangkok, and Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. The time frame for cooperation is 2018-21. Uttama Savanayana, the industry minister, said the consortium hopes to draw up an action plan for robotics and system integration (SI) over the next two weeks. "The government is very keen to promote and support the usage of robotics and SI, and we are confident that these systems can improve our small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in terms of productivity, and competitiveness. Mr Uttama said the government has assured foreign ambassadors that the EEC project will not be delayed, as the 2018 EEC Act has already been implemented and related laws for the investment there are being drafted.

4. Experts Propose Total Ban On E-Waste Operations

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

Basel convention 'inadequate' in protecting Thailand from dumping of hazardous wastes. There are no clear answers from officials about whether Thailand is changing its policy on the transboundary movement of hazardous waste under the Basel Convention, as the international agreement is seen by some officials and experts as ineffective in stopping the flow of electronic and plastic waste into the country. Natural Resources and Environment Ministry permanent secretary Wijarn Simachaya June 14 said that many people have raised concerns about the convention's effectiveness in restricting the import of hazardous wastes into the country. The national reform steering committee has called a meeting for June 20 to find a common resolution among the related agencies. "The problem of electronic and plastic waste imports is a complex one and even though the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry is the main coordinator of the Basel Convention in Thailand, there are many other official agencies also involved in this issue," Wijarn said. "Therefore, it will need many ministries and related agencies to work together on the solution."

5. Bigo Brings Gaming App To Thailand

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

Singapore-based Bigo Technology Co, an operator of live streaming and video broadcasts, has launched its live-streaming mobile game app in Thailand to capitalise on e-sports business. The company's Cube TV app for e-sports live streaming is expected to tap the growing gamer market. Bigo also plans to expand Cube TV to other countries and other regions in the next few years. Wei Li Xian, Bigo Live's marketing director for Thailand, said gaming is continuing to grow as people can access the medium anywhere, anytime. The gaming market in Thailand last year increased significantly, with computer games bringing in 6.3 billion baht and mobiles games pulling in 4 billion, growth of 13% and 30%, respectively. China is the biggest gaming market, followed by the US, while Thailand is ranked 20th. The company expects Cube TV users will double to 4 million after its launch in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, South America and Russia.

6. New Unit Under NESDB To Handle Inequality

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

The government is setting up a new unit to specifically handle income disparity and poverty and evaluate the performance of the annual social welfare budget. The move is part of the government's ongoing socioeconomic reforms that it wants implemented in the eight months before the scheduled general election. Kobsak Pootrakool, the Prime Minister's Office minister, in his capacity as chairman of the committee tasked with driving social and economic reform, said the new unit will be under the state planning agency, the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), or the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), the NESDB's planned successor. The cabinet on June 12 approved a draft bill for the NESDC to replace the existing NESDB, with the goal of transforming the state planning unit into a think tank that shapes the country's long-term vision and mission.