

Thai News Update: 20 August 2018

1. Q2 GDP Growth Pace Slows, But Govt Keeps 2018 Target

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

Thailand's economy expanded at a slower pace in April-June and tourism decelerated, but the state planning agency kept its 2018 growth forecast at 4.2-4.7% and raised its projection for export gains. Gross domestic product grew a seasonally adjusted 1.0% in the second quarter from the first, the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) said. The pace met a Reuters poll's 1.0% forecast and was far below January-March's fast quarterly pace, which was revised up to 2.1% from 2.0%. On a yearly basis, second quarter expansion was 4.6%, above the poll's 4.5%, but below the first quarter's revised 4.9%, the highest in five years. The NESDB raised its 2018 export growth forecast to 10.0% from 8.9% seen three months ago as it expects shipments to be underpinned by improving trade partners' economies. Exports, a growth driver, were strong in April-June, rising 12.3% from a year earlier. But in the quarter, public spending was less than expected and tourism decreased, NESDB deputy chief Wichayayuth Boonchit told a news conference.

2. Thai King Is Largest Shareholder In Siam Cement

Source: The Star Online ([Link](#))

Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn is now the largest shareholder in the country's biggest industrial conglomerate, Siam Cement Group Pcl, data from the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET), published on its website on August 18 showed. It shows the king as having a 33.3% share, making him the biggest shareholder in the construction and industrial supplies firm. The monarch's holdings in the company have a value of nearly 180 billion baht (US\$5.43bil). It follows an announcement in June from the Crown Property Bureau (CPB) which said assets previously registered to the bureau would now be held "in the name of His Majesty", the latest shake-up in royal affairs under the king who has ruled since 2016, following the death of his father, King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The June announcement saw King Vajiralongkorn, 66, take full, personal ownership of the bureau's assets.

3. EEC Dubbed New Driver Of Thai Economy

Source: Thai Visa News ([Link](#))

The Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) that straddles three eastern provinces of Thailand is emerging as the new driving engine of the Thai economy. Tasanee Kiatpatraporn, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Eastern Economic Corridor Office of Thailand, recently commented that the EEC project is an appropriate mechanism to connect Thailand to neighboring nations, targeting a broad revitalization of manufacturing activities within the 13,300-sq-km area, which embraces the provinces of Chonburi, Rayong and Chachoengsao. During the past two months, she said Thailand has held six overseas roadshows in Japan, China, England, France, South Korea, and Hong Kong to inform foreign investors of the successful initiative. All the roadshows were well-received, according to Tasanee.

4. China-ASEAN Trade Set To Soar

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

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a bloc that constitutes China's third largest trading partner, will exploit a variety of opportunities to further tap China's market, given the encouraging bilateral trade performance last year, an official said. "ASEAN expects more opportunities to export products like some agricultural products to China. Thailand, for instance, hopes for more exports of frozen seafood and beverages to China as tariff on the two kinds are already reduced but exports are still low," said Sakarn Saensopa, consul (commercial) at the Royal Thai Consulate-General in Nanning, capital city of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. "Thailand is also interested in exporting other products from the service and manufacturing sectors to China, like auto parts," Saensopa said. "We also promised to open more of our market by cutting more tariffs in order to have a freer flow of trade and investment."