

Thai News Update: 23 September 2019

1. Govt speeding up megaprojects

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

The government is expediting the Transport Ministry's mega-investment projects worth almost 2 trillion baht to stimulate financial flows and deal with anticipated volatility in the global economy next year. Kobsak Pootrakul, deputy secretary-general for political affairs to the prime minister, said the Transport Ministry's 44 projects worth a total of 1.94 trillion baht were discussed at yesterday's meeting of economic ministers. The ministers hope to speed up the projects, which remain stalled. The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha. Massive investment budgets earmarked for the projects will help spur the country's economic growth and create jobs, said Mr Kobsak, who served as secretary to the meeting of economic ministers.

2. New airport under scrutiny

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

Along with significant growth in the tourism industry over the past five years has been growth in air traffic which has exceeded the capacity of current infrastructure. Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang gateways are serving 35 million passengers over-capacity each year. Overcrowded terminals and long queues are a common sight at both airports while airport slots are fully booked by airlines without room for more flights, not to mention growing demand for chartered planes and private jets.

3. Thai rice exports may drop below 10 million tonnes this year

Source: Thai PBS World ([Link](#))

The value of Thai exports for the month of August fell 4% to 21.915 billion US dollars, compared to the same period last year, with exports of rice declining by an alarming 44.7%, sparking concern among commerce officials that Thailand's rice exports for this year will fail to

reach 10 million tonnes. Ms. Pimchanok Wornkhorporn, director of the Office of Trade Policy and Strategy at the Commerce Ministry, said on 20 September that Thai exports have contracted for six consecutive months to a total of 166.091 billion US dollars, representing a 2.1% decline compared to the same period last year. Imports for August dropped 14.6% to 19.862 billion US dollars, resulting in a 2.053 billion baht trade surplus. The drop in exports is being blamed largely on the ongoing trade war between the US and China, which has affected the whole of Asia, with ASEAN wide exports shrinking 23.9%, 20% for South Asia and 18% for India respectively.

4. Trade war bolsters Chinese interest in Thailand

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

More Chinese manufacturers are looking to Thailand as a production base to avoid US tariffs, based on trends in demand for industrial estates. WHA Corp, the top Thai provider of such estates, said it expects Chinese companies to account for as much as half of its land sale contracts both this year and next, up from about 12% in 2018. The firm also develops industrial parks in Vietnam. "People are moving some production," David Nardone, the group executive for the firm's industrial-development unit, said in an interview. "It will be a significant impact for Thailand and Vietnam. A drop of water for China can be a flood for us, because of the different size of the economies."

5. Consumers' rights to be protected under new MoU

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

The Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA) last week signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with major consumer organizations and private companies on a consumer protection initiative covering products and services sold online. Consumer organizations - the Independent Committee for Consumer Protection (ICCP), the Association of Confederation of Consumer Organization, Thailand (ACCOT) and the Foundation for Consumers joined private companies Central JD Commerce Co Ltd, LNW Co Ltd, and Beautynista Co Ltd in inking the agreement at a ceremony chaired by Tewan Liptapallop, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office.