

Thai News Update: 27 December 2019

1. THAI aims to sign JV on U-Tapao MRO project in August 2020

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

The MRO centre is expected to be operational in April 2023, THAI president Sumeth Damrongchaitham said. THAI owns the project development. On December 9, a committee tasked with selecting a private company finished revising the details of the criteria for selecting companies to join the project. THAI has already sent invitation letters to interested companies to join with it in the project development. They can submit the proposals to join the project on March 6, 2020. After the submission of the proposals, THAI will enter into the negotiations with them to select the investment partner. It expects the talks to conclude next May.

2. Finance Ministry upbeat on private investment

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

The Finance Ministry has painted a rosy picture of private investment, forecasting 2020 growth of 4.6%, up from 2.7% predicted for this year. Investment in the government's flagship Eastern Economic Corridor project, an increase in exports and 2020 fiscal budget disbursement set to kick off in February should all rally private investment, said Wuttipong Jittungsakul, deputy director-general of the Fiscal Policy Office (FPO). For the nine months to September, private investment expanded by 3% from a year earlier. The Finance Ministry's think tank forecasts the economy to expand by 2.8% this year and 3.3% the next. Among policymakers, the FPO's projection is more optimistic than that of the Bank of Thailand, which predicts 2.5% this year and 2.8% in 2020, and of the National Economic and Social Development Council, which sees 2.6% in 2019 and 2.7-3.7% in 2020.

3. Scheme okays 28 SMEs

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

An initiative offering 3 billion baht in soft loans to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has had 28 companies approved, obtaining loans for a combined 70.8 million baht, according to an Industry Ministry report. The loan programme under the Pracha Rat initiative began accepting

applications on Nov 15. The ministry will close enrolment after approving applications reaching a total of 3 billion baht. The scheme offers an annual interest rate of 1% for seven years. Kobchai Sungsitthisawad, the ministry's permanent secretary, said 700 applications are pending consideration for a combined amount of 2 billion baht. According to the ministry's report, most applicants are from Bangkok, Samut Prakan, Songkhla, Samut Sakhon, Pathum Thani, Nakhon Pathom and Phuket.

4. Asia Rice-Thai rice export prices rise as drought triggers future supply concerns

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

Thailand's rice export prices rose this week on concerns that a drought hitting the country may harm future supplies of the crop, while the festive season led to thin trade in India and Vietnam. Thailand's benchmark 5 percent broken rice prices were quoted at \$424-\$435 on Thursday, an increase from \$395-\$420 the week before. "There are concerns that the ongoing drought could hurt future supply so there is speculative buying and stockpiling by some mills and exporters, which has driven up the prices," a Bangkok-based rice trader said. The government introduced emergency measures last week in 11 provinces around the country, many of them rice-growing areas. Thailand, the world's second-largest rice exporter, will not have enough water to grow the crop in some 960,000 hectares of rice fields around the Chao Phraya River basin, authorities said in early November.

5. NBTC lays out its plans for 2020

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

The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) office has outlined its missions for next year ranging from the auction of 5G spectrum bands to its continued transformation into a "digital office". NBTC secretary-general Takorn Tantasith said on Thursday (December 26) that the first key task is to auction four spectrum bands (700 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2600 MHz and 26 GHz) for 5G service as planned. The commission will continue to remove communications lines from poles and move them underground and will also delegate more authority to its branches in the provinces, so that these can provide a wider range of services to residents in their areas and obviate doing the need for them come to its head office in Bangkok to ask for the services.

6. Online product without price tags declared illegal

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

The Commerce Ministry warned e-tailers this week that listing online products without a price tag was illegal and carried a penalty of up to Bt10,000. Chatchai Saksilapachai, Deputy Director-General, said that the regulation that all offline products must carry a price tag has been extended to include products sold online. The new rule was being introduced in response to complaints that many products advertised online did not clearly indicate the price, forcing interested customers to send a message requesting a quotation. This considered unfair and illegal as it implies the seller is deliberately concealing the price and the service charge. Screening e-tailers is hard rough work because of the physical locations of the merchants. The ministry thus encouraging anyone who found the illegal action to report by providing the leading price.