

Thai News Update: 16 January 2020

1. Government hospitals to get more funding

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

The Social Security Office (SSO) will increase the contribution it pays to its affiliated hospitals by 16% in order to improve the quality of care provided at the facilities, said permanent labour secretary and SSO chairman Suthi Sukosol on 15 January. Mr Suthi said the decision to increase the rate was approved at a board meeting held on 14 January. "The hike is necessary because we are seeing more senior citizens enrolling in our welfare scheme. This, coupled with inflation, has increased our overall costs, so we have to adjust the costs of treatments accordingly," he said. "We don't want to hospitals to shoulder the added burden."

2. Huge new stimulus package coming: Somkid

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

Thailand needs to rev up both public and private investment, including infrastructure development as well as the promotion of the tourism and service sectors, to boost economic growth this year, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak told a business seminar on 15 January. The central bank estimated 2019 growth at 2.5%, a five-year low, and forecast 2.8% growth for this year. Private investment has amounted to only 16% of gross domestic product, while the baht was Asia's best-performing currency in 2019, rising almost 9% against the US dollar. "We have to stimulate private investment during this time of a strong baht," Mr Somkidsaid. "I've already talked with the customs and revenue departments, and there will be a package."

3. Foreigners may get chance to invest in TFFIF units

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

The government is likely to let foreign investors plough money into the Thailand Future Fund (TFFIF), a state-backed infrastructure fund, amid strong interest. TFFIF's return of 5-6% has caught foreigners' attention because such returns are considered high in a low-interest-rate environment, said Finance Minister Uttama Savanayana. TFFIF's initial public offering, which

raised funds worth 44.7 billion baht in October 2018, received an overwhelming response from the public, prompting the government to consider issuance of a new batch of units. TFFIF, which is listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand, is backed by 45% of future revenue from the Chalong Rat Expressway and the Burapha Withi Expressway, both owned by the Expressway Authority of Thailand.

4. Businesses ready to roll with clear 5G timeline

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

Business operators are keen on 5G adoption after seeing a clear-cut schedule from the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) to proceed with 5G licence auctions next month. On 15 January the Economic Reporters Association organised a seminar titled "In-depth Outlook of Flagship Industries in 2020". Jareeporn Jarukornsakul, chairman and chief executive of WHA Corporation Plc, said the group is preparing four business units -- logistics, industrial development, utilities and power, and digital platforms -- to capture opportunities related to imminent 5G technology. Previously the NBTC said WHA sought permission to run a 5G testbed in collaboration with mobile operators.

5. Govt presses 45 state enterprises to start investing

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

Forty-five state enterprises and their subsidiaries were prodded on January 15 to begin disbursing at least Bt100 billion in the first quarter of the year. The urging came at a meeting at the State Enterprise Policy Office (Sepo) chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak. Sepo deputy director Chanvit Nakburee said the state enterprises planned to invest Bt345.14 billion this year. Among the key mega-projects targeted are the Red Line mass transit extension and double-track railway development. Sepo director-general Prapas Kong-Ied said Somkid had urged the state enterprises to speed disbursement of funding by giving top priority to projects requiring imported raw materials and those involving overseas investment.