



THE ROUND-UP



PHOTO: PATTANAPONG HRUNARD

Motorway 7 leads to Chon Buri and Lat Krabang. The Highways Department stands to gain the most among state enterprises in terms of raising funds from the public.

SOEs pushed to mobilise public funds

WICHIT CHANTANUSORNSIRI

The Highways Department is expected to raise 40-50 billion baht from the issuance of the second lot of the Thailand Infrastructure Fund (TFFIF).

The State Enterprise Policy Office (Sepo) plans to push state enterprises to mobilise funds by using their brownfield projects as underlying assets, with proceeds used for investment in new projects, lowering the fiscal burden, said director-general Prapas Kong-Ied.

Encouraging state enterprises to raise funds from the public through infrastructure funds is in line with Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak's policy to lighten the public investment burden, but fund mobilisation rests on each state enterprise's decision, Mr Prapas said.

The Highways Department stands to gain the most among state enterprises in

terms of raising funds from the public, he said, but the law must be amended to enable the department to use toll fees of brownfield projects to back infrastructure funds.

The amended law, approved by the Council of State, is set to go before the cabinet and lawmakers.

"Amending the law is beyond our control, and depends on the considerations of parliament and senators," Mr Prapas said. "The duration for amendments is always different. For example, under the previous government, laws could sail through, having three readings within a short period."

Sepo estimates that projects with potential to mobilise funds from the public include the Blue and Purple Line electric trains, the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand's power plants, motorways 7 and 9, the Don Muang Tollway, and the first and second stages of expressways.

TFFIF's first lot mobilised 44.7 billion baht from the public last year and is backed by the 30-year right to earn 45% of future revenue from the Chalong Rat and Burapha Withi expressways, both owned by the Expressway Authority of Thailand. The fund was the biggest IPO since 2015.

SET-listed TFFIF closed yesterday at 13.20 baht, well above its IPO price of 10

baht.

In other news, Mr Prapas said the planned merger of TOT Plc and CAT Telecom will seek approval from the cabinet soon because the consolidation process must be completed within six months.

Sepo believes a merger will help the state enterprises exit from business rehabilitation plans, he said.