

**RAILWAYS**

# Govt backs B11bn loan for SRT this year

**MONGKOL BANGPRAPA**

The cabinet yesterday decided to allow the debt-ridden State Railway of Thailand (SRT) to borrow over 11 billion baht this year.

Trisulee Trisaranakul, a deputy government spokeswoman, said the SRT would borrow a total of 11.710 billion baht with the Finance Ministry acting as guarantor for the loan.

Of the amount, 10.91 billion baht would be used to fund the agency's operations and the remaining 800 million baht would be spent on procurement schemes and payment obligations, she said.

The SRT is one of the country's most debt-ridden state enterprises with accumulated debts of more than 100 billion baht.

She said the state enterprise's poor financial health could be attributed to its public services.

According to the deputy spokeswoman, the cabinet yesterday approved the Transport Ministry's proposed expenditure of 179 billion baht sought for projects with tied-over budget from 2021-2024.

The budget includes 34.1 billion baht for projects to be implemented by the Department of Highways. Among them are a bypass road construction scheme in Chiang Khong district in Chiang Rai province and a motorway project linking Rangsit and Bang Pa-in.

The other projects include 760 million baht to upgrade Nakhon Si Thammarat Airport by the Department of Airports, the SRT's 861-million-baht scheme to install a communications network, and two road projects worth 630 million baht by the Department of Rural Roads.