

“Minister Pimphattra” commences the annual OIE Forum 2023, transforming the Thai industry, revealing six urgent agendas to support the industrial sector and Thai businesses to grow sustainably.

The Minister of Industry, Miss Pimphattra Wichaikul, presided over the opening ceremony and gave a special speech at the 15th annual OIE FORUM 2023, "MIND: Set for Sustainability, Adjusting the Perspective and Transforming the Thai Industry Toward Sustainability." The event was organized by the Office of Industrial Economics (OIE) to open a forum for exchanging ideas in driving the Thai industry toward sustainable growth. The event revealed the six urgent agendas in key areas to drive the Thai industry to strong and sustainable growth and to develop the country's competitiveness in the long term.

The Minister of Industry, Miss Pimphattra Wichaikul, presided over the opening ceremony of the 15th annual OIE FORUM 2023, “MIND: Set for Sustainability, Adjusting the Perspective and Transforming the Thai Industry Toward Sustainability.” She delivered a special speech on “Driving the Thai industry towards a sustainable Thai economy.” The event was organized by the Ministry of Industry's Office of Industrial Economics. In her speech, she said that today's global economy and society are rapidly changing and have become more complex. This is especially true in the past 3-4 years due to the COVID-19 outbreak that had a widespread impact, coupled with rapid technological changes, climate volatility, entering into an aging society, regional competition, and the economic conditions of trading partners around the world. In addition, international economic and security conflicts are still protracted. These factors put the Thai economic and industrial sector in a state of having to face new challenges constantly.

However, the overall Thai industrial economy in the second half of 2023 is likely to improve from the first half of the year. The growth is a result of the expansion of private consumption in almost every product category. This is in line with the improvement of employment and, as a result of the tourism sector's recovery, has a positive effect on industries in the value chain, such as the food and beverage industry, pharmaceuticals, and the fashion industry. However, economic growth still faces key risk factors, including the slowdown of the world economy, international conflicts, and the high level of household and business debt amidst an increase in interest burden. These factors are a constraint on the recovery of domestic demand and the debt repayment ability of Thai people, especially SMEs. There will be a push for debt suspension for SME businesses following government policy that seeks appropriate support measures, such as suspending the principal and interest, without creating moral hazard issues or debtors defaulting on their debts. Meanwhile, climate fluctuations have affected production in the agricultural sector, which has a continuous effect on raw materials entering the industrial sector. This especially impacted highly sensitive areas that must have effective water management between the agricultural and industrial sectors, including efficient management of other resources to deal with climate change promptly.

The Ministry of Industry has established a policy to promote and support the industrial sector and all groups of Thai businesses to grow with quality, to be a cog in driving the country's economy, and to care for society and the environment. There are six urgent agendas for industrial development, consisting of:

- 1. Target industries**, emphasizing industries that will be the future of the country, such as the electric vehicle (EV) industry, and cover related products such as the production of batteries and circuit boards.
- 2. Existing industries** that have the potential to become economic industries under the concept of an "industry-led economy" by using standards, productivity, and innovation as a tool to increase competitiveness in industries where Thailand has potential. An example is the Halal industry, thereby promoting Thailand to be a Halal food center in the region (Halal Hub), along with expanding markets to countries with purchasing power and a high-income Muslim customer base for Thailand, including medicines, cosmetics, and Halal spas.
- 3. Environmentally friendly industries**, by improving and enforcing the law and setting stricter emissions standards in industrial areas.
- 4. Focusing on becoming a digital government** to provide services that are compliant with relevant laws, where services are carried out quickly and efficiently. This includes systematically improving the industrial database.
- 5. Promoting SMEs and startups** to be able to survive various risks by supporting them with knowledge, expertise, technology, and low-interest funding sources through mechanisms of agencies within the Ministry.
- 6. Preparedness for dealing with climate change**, especially in highly sensitive areas that require effective water management between the agricultural and industrial sectors. The implementation of the plan will result in a better direction for the Thai industrial economy, promoting the country's development and competitiveness in the long run, which can support Thailand in overcoming various crises and moving forward toward sustainable growth in the future.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Dr. Nattapol Rangsitpol, said that the Ministry of Industry's policy aims towards an "economic industry" that "grows sustainably with the community" in four dimensions; the first dimension is business success, the second dimension is well-being with the whole society, the third dimension is harmony with international regulations, and the fourth dimension is income distribution into the community, and strengthening the community. In addition, to elevate work towards a digital government, the Ministry of Industry has opened the **i-Industry platform**, which manages the Ministry of Industry's central information center. The platform is open to customers of the Ministry of Industry to register to access the Ministry's services in various areas, including approval, permissions, payment of promotion and development fees, and business consulting. Business operations reports and data can also be submitted through the iSingleForm to be used in industrial index analysis, design policies, and creating mechanisms for relevant industrial development. The measures also include factory visits to ensure compliance with the Ministry's regulations covering four areas, including land, water, wind, and fire, so that business operators can have good business operations, which reduces conflicts and eliminates community and social complaints.

The Director of the Office of Industrial Economics (OIE), Mrs. Warawan Chitaroon, added that the **OIE FORUM 2023**, an annual event, is an important activity that will help drive operations to achieve the goals. The event has been held every year and is going into its 15th year. The objective is to be a platform to present perspectives and exchange ideas for driving the development of the Thai industry towards balanced and sustainable growth. It aims to respond to development goals following the national strategy and sustainable development at the international level. The event had over 2,000 attendees, covering target groups, including industrial operators, government agencies, the private sector, civil society, the education sector, academics, experts, the media, and the general public. Over 550 people attended the event at the event location, and 1,500 people participated online (live streaming).

The event consisted of important activities, including a special talk on **“Driving the Thai industry towards a sustainable Thai economy”** by the Minister of Industry, whereas the Permanent Secretary of Industry spoke about the Ministry of Industry’s operations. There was also a discussion on **“MIND: Set for Sustainability, Adjusting the Perspective and Transforming the Thai Industry Toward Sustainability”** from expert speakers from the industry and an exhibition presenting the outcomes of important operations by the Office of Industrial Economics, covering 11 topics. There were online webinars on three subtopics, running for four consecutive days. The first topic is "Manpower: Upgrading the Modern Workforce and Transforming Thai Industry towards Sustainability." The second topic was "Empowering Innovation and Digital Transformation: Empowering the Future of Thai Industry," and the third topic was "Next Moves to Net Zero: The Thai Industry and Next Steps Towards the Global Goals."