

Source : **BANGKOK POST**

Date : 5 JUL 2018 Page : 01

No : **61216121**

ENERGY

Power plan makeover to encourage small traders

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The revised national power development plan (PDP) is set to add energy blockchain technology to the master plan to allow very small power producers (VSPPs) to serve as peer-to-peer electricity traders, says the Energy Ministry.

The PDP draft is scheduled to be finished by September, which will create a blueprint for Thailand's energy outlook for the next two decades.

The master plan can be revised any year, depending on economic sentiment.

Minister Siri Jirapongphan said the revised PDP will open the energy sector up to new disruptive technologies that can

enhance efficiency and secure the power generation system.

"The new version will include renewable power from solar, hydro and waste-to-energy as well as new electricity generation from a power storage," Mr Siri said in a seminar titled "A Future of Thai Energy", held by *Thansettakij* newspaper, with over 300 stock investors in attendance.

He said that peer-to-peer power trading will allow generators and users to exchange surplus power output, aiming to encourage startups in the energy sector.

"Energy policymakers aim to encourage the VSPPs to compete in the power generation market as independent and small

power producers [IPPs and SPPs], operating power plants and selling electricity to state utilities," said Mr Siri.

The three power utilities are Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat), Metropolitan Electricity Authority and Provincial Electricity Authority.

"Moreover, policymakers do not want Egat power plants, IPPs and SPPs to dominate the power generation market in the future," he said.

Mr Siri said the new PDP version will cancel the fixed quota for fossil power generation, but shift to a flexible quota.

The existing PDP was imposed in 2014 with a fixed quota for fossil power generation until 2036 — 35% gas-fired power and 30% coal-fired power. The plan has allotted 20% of power to be purchased from neighbouring countries, 20% from renewable and 5% from nuclear sources.

Moreover, Mr Siri said the details for the solar photovoltaic (PV) rooftop promotion programmes will be completed by 2018.

He said the programme is suitable for newcomers or startups to open small-scale solar PV rooftops.

The country's first PV programme was launched in 2013 to a warm welcome from investors, but coincided with political turmoil. The ministry postponed the distribution of 2,000-megawatt licences.

Furthermore, solar PV farms that were granted licences before 2013 have not seen further development.

Separately, policymakers are planning to allocate 200 million baht to build a pilot plant for lithium-ion and lithium-sulfur batteries, which is an R&D project for students at Vidyasirimedhi Institute of Science and Technology (VISTEC).

The new plant will be located at Wangchan Valley in Rayong, adjacent VISTEC, which is owned by national oil and gas conglomerate PTT Plc.

The Energy Conservation Fund will financially support the project, which is expected to spearhead the country's energy saving and efficient consumption campaign.