

S-E Asia urged to plug public works gap

Set out proper rules of engagement for private investors: World Bank official

Yasmine Yahya

South-east Asia has drawn increasing levels of infrastructure investment in recent years but more can be done to boost public works, a World Bank official said yesterday.

Mr Clelan Mandri-Perrott, its head of infrastructure finance and public-private partnerships, noted that public spending outstrips gross domestic product across the region – a good sign. “Yet when you go to some of these countries, you can physically see that the infrastructure gap is still there,” he said.

One answer to this problem is getting private investment, a process that is already well under way.

Last year, private investors poured in US\$15 billion (S\$20.3 billion) into South-east Asian infrastructure projects.

But while the trend is positive, the actual volume is still rather low.

Mr Mandri-Perrott told the World Bank-Asia Competitiveness Institute (ACI) annual conference: “Despite the fact that we talk a lot about private participation in infrastructure, the number is not massive compared with the needs.

“It’s not good enough. It’s not plugging those gaps that we have.”

Countries in the region have to set out proper rules of engagement for private-sector investors, including having a stable regulatory and political environment.

Private investors shy away from uncertainties such as sudden currency devaluations and capital repatriations, said Mr Mandri-Perrott.



President Halimah Yacob pausing for a selfie with participants of the World Bank-Asia Competitiveness Institute annual conference yesterday. Connectivity is a key factor in stimulating economic growth and employment, she said, and to that end Singapore has been working closely with the World Bank and other multilateral development banks to build a strong regional network to support the growth of regional infrastructure. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

President Halimah Yacob told the event that countries should work even more closely together for their mutual benefit.

Infrastructure development is not just about constructing facilities, but also about people, she noted, adding: “It’s not just a question of build-

ing infrastructure, but to build it in a way that would not harm the climate, and would ensure that people’s futures are taken care of.”

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working closely with the World Bank and other multilateral development banks to build a strong regional network to support the growth of regional infrastructure.

ACI co-director Tan Khee Giap noted during a panel discussion at the conference that he has called

on the Singapore Government to be more aggressive in hosting more industry clusters.

In an opinion piece in The Straits Times yesterday, Mr Tan and Mr Henry Kwek, an MP for Nee Soon GRC, said Singapore should aim to be a hub for infrastructure develop-

MORE CAN BE DONE

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MR CLEDAN MANDRI-PERROTT, the World Bank’s head of infrastructure finance and public-private partnerships, on the trend of private investment in South-east Asian infrastructure projects being positive, but the actual volume being still rather low.

RESPONSIBLE BUILDING

It’s not just a question of building infrastructure, but to build it in a way that would not harm the climate, and would ensure that people’s futures are taken care of.



PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB, who said that countries should work even more closely together for their mutual benefit.

ment, investment and financing.

This would entail, for example, an infrastructure-related business arbitration centre and an internationalisation drive for yuan with bond issuance and deeper capital markets.

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