

# Thai builders team up with the Japanese

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Thai homebuilders yesterday teamed up with the Japan Traditional Wooden Home Association to transfer technology and know-how, and to support Thais working for Japanese homebuilding firms.

Pichit Arunepunlop, president of the Home Builder Association (HBA), said the partnership will also include on-the-job training for five years in Japan, targeting mainly Thai vocational students.

Like other industrial sectors, homebuilding has been subject to labour shortages. Mr Pichit said there were just 1,449 vocational workers in the homebuilding industry in 2014, down 23% from the previous year.

The industry employs 3,000-5,000 undergraduates a year.

"Such numbers are not enough for the construction sector, we need roughly 10,000 a year," Mr Pichit said, adding that construction is considered a tough and dirty job by many Thais.

The partnership with Japanese homebuilders will help create added value for Thai homebuilders, according to Mr Pichit.

In a similar model, the HBA teamed up with the Joint Public-Private Consultative Committee and Dusit Technical College three years ago to support a dual vocational education system, providing on-the-job training for vocational students.

The scheme has chosen vocational students to train as assistant foremen four days a week, with a salary of 9,000 baht a month. Homebuilders that employ vocational students have paid a combined 200,000 baht per student in the two-year programme.

Mr Pichit said Thailand's homebuilding market is expected to recover in the second half as the imminent land and buildings tax helps stimulate demand before coming into force next year.

The land and buildings tax would prompt those who purchased land for self-building to kick off construction in the second half to avoid seeing their plots taxed under the new law, he said.

Economic sentiment is also improving thanks to the launch of megaprojects and low interest rates and oil prices.

These positive factors would boost homebuilding sentiment in the second half, leaving the political situation as the only major concern.