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Crane Collapse… Exposing Structural Problems in the Construction Sector:

Reform or Repeat the Same Mistakes?

21 January 2026

Crane Collapse... Exposing Structural Problems in the Construction Sector: Reform or Repeat the Same Mistakes?

KEY SUMMARY

Consecutive construction crane collapse incidents have undermined public confidence in the safety of public infrastructure projects on a broad scale.

The series of construction crane collapses in January 2026 included: (1) the collapse of a crane at the Bangkok–Nakhon Ratchasima high-speed rail project site, which fell onto Special Express Train No. 21 operating on the Krung Thep Aphiwat–Ubon Ratchathani route; and (2) the collapse of a crane at the elevated roadway project on the Ekkachai–Ban Phaeo section (Motorway M82), which fell onto private vehicles. In addition, the collapse of the new Office of the Auditor General building under construction as a result of an earthquake in 2025, together with subsidence of completed and ongoing road construction in multiple areas occurring on a continuing basis, has collectively eroded confidence in the safety standards of public sector construction projects more broadly.

Addressing structural issues—through both strengthening regulatory oversight of construction contractors and adopting construction technologies—will help enhance safety in construction activities.

- **Strengthening regulatory oversight of construction contractors.** In the short term, it is necessary to accelerate the implementation of the contractor performance record system (including the deduction of accumulated points in cases of contractor violations). In addition, procurement processes for construction contractors must be made more stringent at every stage—from bidding and construction to project inspection and acceptance. This should be accompanied by the rigorous enforcement of penalties against contractors with construction deficiencies or delivery failures, ranging from financial penalties and disqualification from bidding, to downgrading of contractor classification and, ultimately, removal from the approved contractor list.

  In the long term, the construction sector across the entire supply chain must be upgraded through the establishment of an institution responsible for regulating and developing the construction industry. In this regard, the public sector may consider approaches to establishing a regulatory and development body for the construction sector, drawing on the

example of Malaysia's Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), which plays a role in providing advice and policy recommendations to the government, as well as in regulation, standard setting, and upgrading the quality of construction contractors, extending to research and development to promote and facilitate the international competitiveness of the construction sector.

- **The adoption of construction technologies will significantly reduce the risk of accidents**, such as through the use of automated equipment and machinery to replace manual labor in hazardous tasks, and the deployment of sensor devices to provide alerts when equipment or machinery is operating abnormally or when maintenance and repair intervals are due. In this regard, the public sector plays a key role in accelerating the adoption of construction technologies through measures including the establishment of technology usage standards in public construction project procurement, support for research and development of construction technologies, reductions in corporate income tax, and the provision of financial support for contractors investing in relevant technologies and software.

Construction contractors should accelerate quality upgrading and exercise caution in adopting excessively low-price bidding strategies. Contractors should enhance quality by selecting reliable partners and subcontractors, strengthening construction processes to ensure safety, using construction materials and machinery that meet quality and standard requirements, and delivering projects on time and to the required quality. In addition, the adoption of technology will help increase productivity. At the same time, participation in construction project tenders should avoid overly aggressive price-based competition, in order to prevent situations in which contractors are pressured to preserve profit margins by cutting costs through reductions in construction quality.

KEY POINTS

Consecutive construction crane collapse incidents occurred in January 2026, including: (1) the collapse of a crane at the Bangkok–Nakhon Ratchasima high-speed rail project, which fell onto Special Express Train No. 21 operating on the Krung Thep Aphiwat–Ubon Ratchathani route in Sikhiu District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province; and (2) the collapse of a crane at the elevated roadway project on the Ekkachai–Ban Phaeo section (Motorway M82), which fell onto private vehicles in Mueang District, Samut Sakhon Province.

Table 1: Details of Projects Involved in Construction Crane Collapse Incidents

Project	Project Value	Project Progress as of Nov 2025
Bangkok–Nakhon Ratchasima High-Speed Rail Project **Contract 3–4: Lam Takhong–Sikhiu Section and Kut Chik–Khok Kruat Section, total length of 37.45 kilometers**	THB 9,848 million	Construction progress: 99.45% complete
Elevated Roadway Project, Ekkachai–Ban Phaeo Section (Motorway M82), Section 7, total length of 1.43 kilometers	THB 1,868 million	Construction progress: 82.34% complete

Source: SCB EIC analysis based on data from the State Railway of Thailand and the Department of Highways.

In this regard, the Ministry of Transport has ordered a temporary suspension of construction works for 15 days on 14 contracts under agencies affiliated with the Ministry of Transport involving a major construction contractor associated with the crane collapse incidents. These contracts include motorway projects, expressways, high-speed rail, double-track railways, mass transit rail systems, and various building renovation works, in order to conduct a thorough review of safety standards. Further monitoring is required regarding the potential cancellation of project contracts associated with the crane collapse incidents involving the contractor concerned.

In addition, the Ministry of Transport has ordered a suspension of construction activities for large-scale projects under agencies affiliated with the Ministry of Transport across all companies for a period of up to 15 days. However, where inspections confirm readiness and the ability to safely resume construction, it is expected that other projects will be able to continue construction thereafter.

Implications for Public Sector Construction Projects

The consecutive construction crane collapse incidents in January 2026, together with other incidents that have occurred on an ongoing basis in recent periods, have broadly undermined confidence in the safety of public sector construction projects. These include the collapse of the new Office of the Auditor General building under construction in Bangkok due to an earthquake in 2025, as well as other incidents such as subsidence of completed and ongoing road construction in multiple areas. The impact has been particularly evident in projects undertaken by contractors with a history of substandard construction practices, frequent construction-related accidents, the use of construction materials and machinery that do not meet quality and standard requirements, and failures to complete and deliver projects in accordance with specified requirements.

Addressing structural issues—through both strengthening regulatory oversight of construction contractors and adopting construction technologies—will help enhance construction safety. In addition, construction contractors should accelerate quality upgrading and exercise caution in adopting excessively low-price competitive bidding strategies.

- **Strengthening regulatory oversight of construction contractors through the expedited implementation of the contractor performance record system, stricter procurement processes at all stages, and the establishment of a dedicated regulatory authority.**

SCB EIC views that, in the short term, the public sector must urgently restore confidence in safety standards by accelerating the implementation of the contractor performance record system. This measure establishes penalties for contractors through the deduction of accumulated points in cases where construction contractors commit violations, cause accidents, or incur damage due to negligence. Once a specified threshold is reached, contractors will face restrictions on their eligibility to bid for projects for a designated period. As of 13 January 2026, this measure has been officially published in the Royal Thai Government Gazette. The subsequent step will involve the issuance of detailed regulations and criteria to enable the formal enforcement of the contractor performance record system.

The procurement process for construction contractors must be made significantly more stringent at every stage. This includes the bidding phase, covering the qualifications and experience of main contractors, partners, and subcontractors; the scrutiny of foreign contractors operating through Thai contractors acting as nominees for bidding or construction activities; and retrospective checks to prevent contractors with records of construction deficiencies or delivery failures from dissolving their original entities and re-establishing new entities to bid for projects anew.

During the construction phase, strict requirements must be imposed to ensure safety, the use of construction materials and machinery that meet quality and standard requirements, and the achievement of zero accidents. **This extends through to the project inspection and acceptance phase**, which must apply more rigorous standards in terms of both timeliness and the quality of delivered works. **Enforcement measures against contractors with construction or delivery issues should be rigorously applied through various sanctions**, ranging from financial penalties and disqualification from bidding, to downgrading of contractor classification and, ultimately, removal from the contractor registry.

A more stringent procurement framework will exert pressure on contractors to prioritize operational upgrading and foster competition based on quality, which is expected to yield positive outcomes for the construction sector as a whole over the medium to long term.

In the long term, it is necessary to upgrade the construction sector across the entire supply chain through the establishment of an institution responsible for regulating and developing the construction industry. This reflects the fact that the construction sector's supply chain comprises diverse processes and activities, and that in the implementation of large-scale construction projects, major contractors typically distribute work across multiple subcontractors, most of which are medium- and small-sized construction firms. At the same time, Thailand's construction sector lacks a central authority responsible for overseeing and developing the industry as a whole.

In this regard, the public sector may consider studying approaches to establishing an authority responsible for the accreditation, regulation, and quality upgrading of construction contractors, drawing on the example of Malaysia, which has the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB). The CIDB comprises representatives from the public sector, the private sector, and construction industry stakeholders, and plays a role in providing advice and policy recommendations to the government, as well as in regulation, standard setting, and the upgrading of contractor quality, including the registration, revocation, suspension, and reinstatement of contractor registrations, and extending to research and development to promote and facilitate the international competitiveness of Malaysia's construction sector.

Another example is Singapore, which has the Building and Construction Authority (BCA), a key institution responsible for regulating safety and standards, promoting sustainability and innovation, and developing workforce skills, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of Singapore's construction sector both domestically and internationally.

- **The adoption of construction technologies will help further reduce the risk of accidents.**

The construction sector is a labor-intensive industry, and labor productivity in the construction sector remains low compared with other industries, while working conditions also entail a high risk of accidents. SCB EIC views that the adoption of construction technologies—such as automated equipment and machinery to replace manual labor in hazardous tasks, and sensor devices to provide alerts when equipment and machinery are operating abnormally or when maintenance and repair intervals are due—will significantly help reduce accident risks during the construction process.

In this regard, the public sector plays a role in accelerating the widespread adoption of such construction technologies through the establishment of standards for the use of construction technologies in public sector construction project procurement, potentially beginning with the application of such standards to large-scale public construction projects. In addition, measures may include promoting research and development of construction technologies, providing corporate income tax reductions, and offering financial support to construction contractors that invest in relevant technologies and software.

- **Construction contractors should accelerate quality upgrading and exercise caution in adopting excessively low-price competitive bidding strategies.**

Construction contractors should accelerate quality upgrading by selecting reliable partners and subcontractors, strengthening construction processes to ensure safety, using construction materials and machinery that meet quality and standard requirements, and delivering projects on time and to the required quality. In addition, the adoption of construction technologies will help increase productivity and improve the management of business challenges, such as reducing labor dependence and accident risks, while also providing a competitive advantage in construction bidding and increasing the likelihood of being shortlisted as a preferred contractor by project owners.

In this regard, participation in construction project bidding should exercise caution in adopting excessively low-price competitive strategies, in order to prevent situations in which contractors are pressured to preserve profit margins by cutting costs through reductions in construction quality. Such practices may include the use of construction materials and machinery that do not meet quality and standard requirements, accelerating construction schedules while neglecting required standards, or selecting subcontractors or joint venture partners that lack reliability based primarily on the lowest construction cost considerations.

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