

TRANSPORT

Govt speeds up plans for highways to the South

SUPOJ WANCHAROEN

Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob has pledged to expedite the construction of new highways that will connect Bangkok with the southern provinces.

Mr Saksayam said Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha had instructed the Transport Ministry to urgently develop Thailand's transport infrastructure, with a focus on enhancing the efficiency of road networks.

The minister yesterday followed up on the progress of the PM's directives on land transport in Ratchaburi province.

The goal of the changes is to make transport more convenient for people and reduce traffic congestion, particularly on the roads from Bangkok to the southern region.

The roads pass six provinces: Bangkok, Nakhon Pathom, Samut Sakhon, Samut Songkhram, Ratchaburi and

Phetchaburi.

One of the projects to improve the southern highway network is to construct a six-lane elevated motorway on Rama II Road through an investment of more than 30 billion baht. The part from Bang Khunthian to Ekkachai is expected to be completed in 2022 and the whole highway in 2024.

The construction of a 109 kilometre highway worth 79 billion baht from Nakhon Pathom to Cha-am district in Phetchaburi has been scheduled to begin this year, with completion expected in 2025.

A 36.8km highway worth 2.65 billion baht in Phetchaburi province is expected to be completed by 2025.

A project to construct a three-lane concrete parallel bridge crossing the Mae Klong River in Ratchaburi province will conduct an environmental impact assessment in 2021. Construction will start in 2023, with completion expected in 2025.

Department of Highways director-general, Sarawut Songsivilai, said the minister had instructed the department to speed up constructing the new highways and vowed to complete the construction on time.

The highways will save time and costs while making inter-regional travel more convenient, faster and safer, Mr Sarawut said.