

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

# DoH 'still waiting' for payout approval

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The Department of Highways (DoH) is still waiting for the cabinet to approve the additional 8-billion-baht budget it requested to expedite the construction of the Bang Yai-Kanchanaburi motorway project, which has been beset by land expropriation issues for over a year.

DoH chief Anon Luangboriboon said the budget is needed to enable the land expropriation process for the 96-kilometre long motorway, which has been faced with stiff opposition by landowners because land prices have more than doubled since the project was approved by the government.

"At present, the payout offers are based on state appraisals which were carried over seven years ago," said Mr Anon.

"A new round of appraisals have been carried out, so we have asked for more money from the government to speed up the process."

Mr Anon said officials have only managed to reclaim roughly 25% — or about 1,000 out of 4,000 — plots of the land needed to make way for the

planned motorway project, so more progress is needed.

"We hope the cabinet can approve the additional budget before the government is sworn in, so the construction won't be delayed any longer," he said.

According to DoH, the project is likely to affect more than 1,000 houses and 5,000 land plots across Nonthaburi, Nakhon Pathom, Ratchaburi, and Kanchanaburi.

The DoH urged the cabinet to act quickly after 200 residents of tambon Bang Taku in Nakhon Pathom's Muang district demanded the government to compensate them for their expropriated land.

Although the compensation was approved by the government two years ago, the residents complained they have not received a single baht for their land which they have already handed to the state.

Some said they had to borrow money from banks to build houses in other areas because they haven't been compensated by the government, and that they are now struggling to repay those loans.