



# DoH urged to review motorway plan

## EIA results 'expired', residents complain

APINYA WIPATAYOTIN

**PHETCHABURI:** About 100 residents who claim plans for a 109-kilometre Nakhon Pathom-Cha-am Motorway project will affect their farms are demanding the Department of Highways (DoH) conduct a new round of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the project.

Over the weekend, residents met state representatives including DoH officials, at a seminar titled "The Future of Petchaburi and the Motorway to the South", organised by the Environment Reporters Club and its partners at Phetchaburi Rajabhat University.

Sumul Sutaviriyawat, the chairwoman of the Natural Resources and Environment Conservation Club in Phetchaburi, said she was concerned the project will harm the livelihoods of local residents living not only in Phetchaburi, but also Ratchaburi and Samut Songkhram.

"The motorway would cut through farmland, which many local residents depend on to make a living," Ms Samul said, before adding that to the best of her knowledge, the DoH launched the project without consulting residents.

At the forum, residents voiced their concerns about the project's EIA results, which were approved by the National Environment Board on June 18, 2010.

They said that the project's EIA has already expired, as the Environment Promotion Act says EIA results are only valid for five years.

As such, they argued the DoH should carry out a new EIA if it really wants to move forward with the project.

Boonreun Choojai, a 56-year-old villager from tambon Rai Saton in



Residents of Phetchaburi's Ban Lat district lead reporters to visit areas which would be affected by the Nakhon Pathom-Cha-am motorway. APINYA WIPATAYOTIN

Phetchaburi's Ban Lat district, said she had studied the proposed project carefully and found that out of the 20 rai of rice fields that she owns, seven would be expropriated to make way for the project.

"Authorities have never asked me if I want it or not. I'm being unfairly treated by authorities, who constantly ignored my views on the project," Ms Boonreun said.

She recalled that DoH officials had visited her village back in 2014, only telling that her paddy fields would be turned into a motorway to the South.

"I was so shocked to learn that the land I inherited from my ancestors will be turned into a motorway. It is only one asset that I have," she said.

"The motorway project will completely ruin my life and my community."

Ban Lat district is one of Phetchaburi's main agricultural area.

Efficient irrigation has allowed local residents to plant up to three crops of rice each year.

However, it also serves as a water retention zone during the rainy season.

"The road will block the water's path to the sea, which will cause heavy floods in the area," local residents complained.

"Muang district is still reeling from the economic loss caused by the three years of consecutive floods."

Satitpong Apimeteetamrong, the director of the 15th Regional Highways Office, said the department is willing to listen to all opinions, adding the project is important to strengthen the country's logistic network.

"The motorway will definitely spur the country's economic growth," he said.

The motorway will be connected to the planned Bang Yai-Kanchanaburi Motorway at Nakhon Pathom's Nakhon Chaisi district.

The motorway will then continue on for 46km through Samut Songkhram to Petchaburi, via Khao Yoi, Muang, Ban Lat and Tha Yang districts.



Somboon Thiantummachart, the deputy chief of the department's survey and design office, said he was happy to see that residents are only opposed to

the current route, but not the project, which still holds out hope.

"We will hold further discussions to draw up a solution," he said.