

Dept pledges to complete Rama II roadwork before Songkran holiday

POST REPORTERS

»The Department of Highways (DoH) has pledged to complete construction work on Rama II Road before the Songkran holiday to ease chronic traffic congestion.

DoH director-general Sarawut Song-sivilai said the department has ordered contractors to bring in more heavy machines and speed up the roadworks.

The latest project started in 2018 and involves improving an 11-kilometre stretch of road between Bang Khun-thian and Ekkachai ramp.

"On behalf of the department, I would like to apologise for the inconvenience caused to motorists on Rama II Road," Mr Sarawut said.

"We would like to assure people that the route [Highway Route 35] will be open for all 14 traffic lanes before Songkran day."

The move to speed up work was initiated by Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob who has received several complaints about heavy traffic congestion after the department launched the road expansion and pavement improvement work on Highway Route 35 in 2018.

It was reported that traffic congestion was likely to double travel time during

the major holiday, as well as lead to a rise of PM2.5 from diesel-engine trucks.

Along the route, there are 10,000 factories that contribute to air quality problems.

Each day, about 100,000 vehicles use the road, which serves as the major route to the southern region.

Heavy traffic congestion prompted residents in Samut Sakhon to lodge complaints in July with the transport minister.

The group put up placards along the road, saying the "never-ending construction" and "construction causes PM2.5".

They asked for a panel made up of residents and the state to oversee the problem and release information on any progress. The panel was formed and has promised to monitor the roadworks until they are completed.

Rama II Road, or Highway Route 35, is the major southwards transport route. It has been under continual construction over past three decades to expand traffic lanes and upgrade the surface pavement which has been damaged by the weight of passing vehicles.

The main section of the road is being widened from three to four lanes. The adjacent frontage lanes are also being upgraded.