

ROADS

Three new routes to ease travel

POST REPORTERS

The Department of Highways will ask the cabinet to approve a 139-billion-baht budget to build three new motorways to cut travel times northwards and southwards of Bangkok.

The planned 119-kilometre Nakhon Pathom-Cha-am route is aimed at speeding travel for motorists heading south from the capital. Construction will cost at least 79 billion baht, more than half the total budget, which has already been approved by the public-private partnership (PPP) committee.

"We are making a final check of the investment plan before forwarding

the project to the cabinet for consideration," Piyapong Jiwattanakulpaisarn, senior professional civil engineer at the department, said.

The other two motorways are an 18-km stretch from Rangsit in the north of the capital to Ayutthaya's Bang Pa-in district and a 15-km route connecting Bang Khunthian in southern Bangkok to Samut Sakhon's Ban Phaeo district.

Mr Piyapong said the department expects to sign contracts for all three projects in 2021 under a PPP-based investment. Another two routes are also being studied under the PPP framework.

The Rangsit-Bang Pa-in motorway will be extended from the Don

Muang-Rangsit section of the tollway, also known as Utraphimuk, while the Bang Khunthian-Ban Phaeo will be linked with a 10-km section of Bang Khunthian-Mahachai motorway.

Elsewhere, construction of an extension to Motorway Route 7 (Bangkok-Ban Chang), connecting Pattaya in Chon Buri and Map Ta Phut in Rayong, is 98% complete, Highways Department chief Sarawut Songsivilai said.

The 32-km route is aimed at easing travel to east-coast industrial areas and attractions like Jomtien beach and Khao Chi Chan, famous for its cliff-top golden Buddha. It is expected to open in August this year.