Laos-Thailand friendship bridge to boost trade & tourism

A fourth friendship bridge linking the Thai province of Chiang Rai to Laos is expected to boost trade, investment, transportation and tourism in Thailand, Laos and China.

The white line along the Lao portion of the Route 3 highway is fast becoming a life line to the land locked nation.

Big wheels roll through the Lao province of Bokeo, some of them carrying goods from as far as China’s Yunnan province.

They make their way downhill to the ferry point at Houayxay, where they will clear customs before continuing the rest of their journey.

For travellers, Lao boatmen provide an essential service as a short ride across the river will land them in Thai soil within a short time.

As travellers clear immigration, a stark reminder is not to deal in endangered animal species.

Chiang Khong is not just a tourism gateway. It is also fast becoming a logistics hub for container trucks.

China , Laos, Thailand and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have invested heavily into the north-south economic corridor.

Soon, a bridge connecting to the road links will make it a seamless highway from Kunming to Bangkok.

Said Roykaew Nitithanprapas, external relations officer of Thailand Resident Mission at ADB: the government of Thailand and China will finance to construct the bridge to complete the route 3 north south economic corridor.

Construction will start in April and it should be completed within 30 months, by the end of 2012.

The first Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge over the Mekong links the Thai province of Nong Khai and Lao PDR capital of Vientiane.

The second Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge links northeastern Thailand’s Mukdahan province with the Lao province of Savannakhet.

The third Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge will link the Thai province of Nakhon Phanom with Thakhek, Khammouane in Laos.

There is an air of excitement in Chiang Rai as both the provincial authorities and business community are gearing up for an expected increase in trade flows.

Priority areas for Chiang Rai’s development plan... is an increase in income from tourism, said Phinij Harnphanich, vice-governor of Chiangrai Province. And increasing cross border trade in Chiang Rai province, which is a main development strategy.

Said Viroon Kumpilo, president of the Chiang Rai Chamber of Commerce: From the logistics point of view, for goods coming from Yunnan, pass through Laos to Thailand, the logistics and the railway link will create great benefits for the people.

With major transport infrastructure in the works in the north-eastern Thai province, Chiang Rai is poised to take off as a regional logistics hub and investment destination.

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