

Land bridge mapped out to public

Project a Malacca Strait alternative

POST REPORTERS

Matters related to the Southern Land Bridge project that aims to facilitate cargo transport between the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea were discussed during a public forum in Chumphon yesterday.

The Transport Ministry's Office of Transport and Traffic Policy and Planning (OTP) conducted the forum that sought input on the project which is under the umbrella of the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC).

At the forum, an OTP official told representatives from various sectors of the importance of the project that would help the economy between provinces located along the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea.

The OTP official said that currently, trade delivery between Thailand and countries in the Indian Ocean needs

to go through the Malacca Strait, which was a long detour.

According to 2018 studies, transportation levels in the strait were heavy with around 85,000 cargo ships passing through it annually. Moreover, the annual number of cargo ships would reach up to 128,000 within 10 years, exceeding the strait's understood capacity of 122,000 ships per year. Such traffic levels would result in congestion and time delays, the official told the forum.

Building the land bridge would help reduce these two problems as cargo transport operators could travel directly from the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea via the road that would cut across Chumphon and Ranong. Furthermore, there would be the construction of two deep-water ports and they would be "smart ports" running on automation systems, the official said.

One port would be located in Chumphon which would deliver and receive goods from East Asian Countries such as China, Japan and South Korea, and also countries in the Pacific Ocean such

as Australia and the US.

The other port would be located in the Andaman Sea in Ranong, which would be linked to deliver and receive goods from the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) countries such as Myanmar, India, Nepal and Bangladesh or other countries located in the West.

The project is undergoing a feasibility study by the OTP on the suitability of further integrating rail, land and pipeline transportation to link these two ports.

The OTP will further study the economic, financial, engineering and social suitability of the SEC. The study will also evaluate environmental effects and report on other uses in accordance with Public-Private Partnership Act 2019. The study will cover a broad range of related matters and is expected to be completed by 2023.

More forums will be held on the project.

