

Thailand hits accelerator on extension of China-Laos railway

Officials from several Thai ministries will visit Vientiane later this month to discuss the Thailand extension of the China-Laos railway.



The August 30-September 1 talks will focus on linking Vientiane with Nong Khai, Transport Minister Saksayam Chidchob said on Sunday.

Plans for the Thai extension of the three-country railway also involve the finance, foreign, agriculture and commerce ministries.

Saksayam said the State Railway of Thailand (SRT) would speed up construction of the Nong Khai-Bangkok high-speed railway and development of Nong Khai station as a trade hub.

The minister also revealed progress on a west-east rail link from Nong Khai.

"SRT will also propose a double-track rail project from Nong Khai to Khon Kaen to the Cabinet," he said.

Meanwhile, the Department of Highways would expedite a request for budget to study construction of a new bridge across the Mekong River.

As for the Finance Ministry, its Customs Department will hasten procurement of mobile X-ray screening equipment for the Nong Khai border checkpoint, as well as implementation of export-import procedures at Nong Khai railway station.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry is collecting data on development in Laos to promote Thai exports and also coordinating with Laos and China on the rail link.

"The Agriculture Ministry will speed up talks with China to open six land checkpoints," Saksayam added.

"The Commerce Ministry will study Thai-Chinese trade in Nong Khai and how to gain advantage from the Laos-China railway."

Saksayam said the Industry Ministry would expedite construction and development of Udon Thani's industrial estate to support trade by rail.

He added that the Transport Ministry was also pushing development of a high-speed railway in the South to link five countries – China, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

"The ministry sees that development of the southern route will help strengthen transport and tourism across the Asean region," he said.

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