

Thailand and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar have signed an agreement on the construction of the second Thai Myanmar Friendship Bridge Crossing Moei/Thaungyin River.

The agreement was signed in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, on 10 September 2015. Representing Thailand at the signing ceremony was Mr. Arkhom Termpittayapaisith, Minister of Transport. The Myanmar side was represented by U Kyaw Lwin, Union Minister for Construction.

The second Friendship Bridge links Mae Sot in Thailand's Tak province with the town of Myawaddy in Myanmar. It will cross the Moei River, which is called Thaungyin in Myanmar. Thailand will bear the cost of building the new bridge. In this regard, the Thai government has offered a grant aid of 3,910 million baht for the project. The Department of Highways, under the Ministry of Transport, has been assigned to be responsible for the design and construction.

Out of the 3,910-million-baht fund, 1,800 million baht will be spent on road construction on both the Thai and Myanmar sides, 800 million baht on the construction of the bridge, and 1,000 million baht on the construction of a border checkpoint. The remaining 310 million baht will be used for the construction of other facilities on the Myanmar side.

The construction of the second Thai Myanmar Friendship Bridge is expected to be completed in 2017. It will link transportation networks to accommodate the development of the East-West Economic Corridor, which connects Viet Nam, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar.

The new bridge will facilitate trade and investment along the border, promote tourism, and increase the flow of people from both countries. The project will also help upgrade logistics in Mae Sot, in line with the development of the Tak Special Economic Zone. The second Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge is expected to reduce traffic congestion at the first Friendship Bridge, which was opened in 1997. The location of the new bridge is about 5 km north of the first bridge.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the development of border connectivity between Thailand and Myanmar demonstrates the mutual benefit and the success of close cooperation between neighboring countries, particularly in light of the building of the ASEAN Community in 2015.

Thailand and Myanmar recently discussed future cooperation in promoting two-way trade and investment with an aim to increase bilateral trade value to 10-12 billion US dollars by 2017. The discussion was made at the Eighth Meeting of the Thailand Myanmar Joint Commission, held in July 2015. Both sides discussed ways to promote connectivity in transportation, the setting up of the committee on land connectivity, and international bus services to facilitate trade, investment, and tourism.