

India, Thailand, Myanmar to be connected with a 1400-km road

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Bangkok: India, Thailand and Myanmar are working on a 1,400-kilometre long highway that will link India with Southeast Asia by land for the first time in decades, giving a boost to trade and cultural exchanges between the three countries.

Indian Ambassador to Thailand Bhagwant Singh Bishnoi said 73 bridges in Myanmar, built more than seven decades ago during World War II, were being renovated with funding from India to allow vehicles to cross the highway safely.

When the repair work will be completed in 18 months, the highway could be opened to traffic from all three countries, he said.

The planned highway starts in the eastern region of India from Moreh to Myanmar's Tamu city.

Negotiations are currently underway to conclude a tri-nation motor vehicle agreement for the use of the 1,400-km road that will reach Thailand at Tak, Mae Sot district.

“There has always been a meeting of minds between India and Thailand. Our two countries share cultural, spiritual and linguistic links. With this road we will also have physical connectivity,” Bishnoi told PTI.

The road will help in transportation of goods and further development of SMEs in North East India, he said, adding the tri-nation highway exemplifies India's “Act East” policy.

Myanmar's Dawei deep-sea port and industrial estate project near the Thai border is also expected to help further integrate eastern India with South East Asian countries.

The planned port can be linked up with India's Chennai port as well as Thailand's Laem Chabang Port on the other side of the ocean, the envoy said.

India is also preparing to negotiate a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which includes the 10-country grouping, on top of the current India-Asean free-trade agreement (FTA).

Thai-Indian trade amounted to \$8 billion last year, while more than a million Indian tourists visited Thailand last year.

There were also about 300 Indian weddings held here.

Among major Thai investors in India are CP Group, Delta Electronics, Ital-Thai and Pruksa Real Estate, while the major Indian firms operating in Thailand are Tata Group, Aditya Birla and Indorama.

- PTI