

Remarks

by

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Minister Attached to the Prime Minister's Office

at the 2nd Economic Corridors Forum

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**Distinguished fellow GMS Ministers,
Distinguished Governors and participants,**

It is indeed my honour to be here at this important Forum joining colleague GMS Ministers, Governors and representatives from GMS countries. On behalf of the Thai delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Kingdom of Cambodia for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation.

Allow me to also express my sincere appreciation for the GMS countries for their continued commitment. Our strong partnership and firm determination are vital to ensure the success of GMS development. My gratitude also goes to ADB for its support in all of our initiatives.

As Thailand's GMS Minister, I take note of the progress made in this framework. Since its establishment in 1992, GMS has proven to be an important mechanism towards enhancing connectivity and economic well-being of our people.

As host of the 15th GMS Ministerial Meeting in June this year, I was pleased to see that we had the opportunity to engage in honest discussions in both our formal consultations and retreats. One of the key outcomes of the meeting is the shared realization that GMS development can only be fully achieved with the active engagement of local authorities and private sector. In this connection, I have brought with me today a team comprising provincial and local authorities as well as representatives from all agencies concerned.

The ECF, no doubt, provides such an essential forum in which local authorities and communities can play a role in fostering economic development in GMS. Thailand wishes to reaffirm our strong support and commitment to the Forum.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Throughout the 17 years of GMS, we have come a long way in enhancing physical connectivity among ourselves. We have been successful in improving transport infrastructure along the East-West Economic Corridor, the North-South Economic Corridor and the Southern Economic Corridor. Indeed, Thailand will continue to emphasize the importance of enhancing transport linkages and play an appropriate role in this area.

Thailand's commitment in enhancing transport linkages in the sub-region is reflected by the financial and technical contributions made to the various transport infrastructure projects along the GMS economic corridors. This includes, among others, the Chiang Rai-Kunming (เชียงใหม่ - กุนหมิง) Road Improvement Project along the NSEC, as well as the Second Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge at the Mukdahan-Savannakhet (มุกดาหาร - สะหวันนะเขต) border along the EWEC.

In addition, Thailand and China have agreed to mutually fund the construction of the Fourth Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge (Huayxay-Chiang Khong, ห้วยทราย - เชียงของ). This bridge, when completed, will remove the last missing link along the NSEC, bringing our countries

even closer. Moreover, Thailand is proud to announce the funding for the 30 km road link between the foot of Tanaosri (ตนาอศรี) Mountain and Kawkareik (กอกะเรีค) in Myanmar, which remains the bottleneck spot along the EWEC. These endeavours reaffirm Thailand's determination to connect all key stakeholders in GMS.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I do believe that **“through connectivity we can achieve prosperity”**. Today, the key challenges are how to turn improved connectivity into enhanced competitiveness as well as how to reap the full benefits from the improved transport linkages in the sub-region for our peoples. To achieve this goal, we need to collectively and actively focus on improving the facilitation along the borders with a view to improve movement of goods as well as people. This will, in turn, increase cross-border trade, joint-venture investment, tourism and other vital economic activities.

In order to transform transport corridors into economic corridors, the GMS Cross Border Transport Agreement (CBTA) was launched more than six years ago. However, its implementation needs to be finalised as soon as possible. In this connection, trade and custom facilitation, including harmonization of rules and regulation must be accelerated. I am delighted that in this very afternoon, Thailand and Cambodia, with the support from ADB, will sign the MOU on bilateral exchange of traffic rights at the Aranyaprathet-Poi Pet (อรัญประเทศ-ปอยเปต) border. It is my hope that this agreement will inspire for more agreements of this kind among other GMS member countries.

Transport facilitation is important, and so is trade facilitation. But they need to go hand in hand with financial support. In this connection, I am pleased to convey that recently, upon Thailand's request, ADB agreed to help conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of SME Development Fund as proposed by the GMS Business Forum.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Development after all is a human-centered process”. As such, the importance of people outreach is stronger than ever. It is my personal conviction that engagement and awareness creation is crucial for the success of GMS. And I made it a point, that on my various field trips to the border provinces, messages are conveyed to the local stakeholders from Governors, to entrepreneurs, to farmers, to local villagers to the very people, who will ultimately benefit from our development. I am of the view that these messages have inspired hope for them. They now know that GMS brought endless opportunities and thus realises how important their involvements are.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we gather here in this magnificent city of Phnom Penh, working to achieve the goals set out by the ECF, I believe success is within our reach. And I also firmly believe that this success will bring about shared prosperity to our peoples in the years to come.

Thank you.