

ประตูการท่องเที่ยวสู่อารยธรรมขอมโบราณผ่านด่านพรมแดนถาวรช่องสง่า

**The Gateway to Old Khmer Culture through Sa-ngam Border Crossing**

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**Executive Summary**

Chong Sa-ngam is the permanent border crossing which the Cabinet has approved in principle on 29 July 2003. After it was inaugurated and operated according to the procedures required, the Ministry of Interior has proclaimed that the Chong Sa-ngam border is one of the permanent crossing on November 11, 2003. This has its development from the fact that Sri Saket province has been one of the provinces which participated in the pilot project on integrated development. It has formulated its strategies and vision of the province and proposed to open the Chong Sa-ngam as the border crossing for trade and tourism with Siam Reap province of Cambodia where Angkor Wat, the world heritage is located. Once this border crossing was opened, road construction was undertaken to link the Chong Sa-ngam in Poo Singh District, Sri Saket province with the Allongway District, Uttaramuechai province to Siam Reap province in Cambodia. The road is about 135 kilometer which is scheduled to be completed in 2009.

In 2003, Thailand has initiated and formulated its economic development strategies for Ayeyawady, ChaoPraya-Makouy Eeonomie Coperation Strategy: ACMECS). Later, Vietnam has joined the collaboration. The cooperation has its operational plans in 5 aspects, namely, education and human resource development, transportation and communication linkages, trade and investment, tourism, and agriculture and industry. Sri Saket province in Thailand also has been designated as the Sister City with Siam Reap province in Cambodia.

Since 1992, there has been Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) for economic cooperation project which is the regional cooperation among 6 countries, namely, Thailand, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia and China (Yunnan). Its goals and objectives are to promote trade and investment, agriculture and services. The cooperation include 9 areas which are transportation, logistics and telecommunications, energy, trade, investment, agriculture, environment, tourism and human resource development. Chong Sa-ngam border crossing is also included under this GMS project. There is the Southern Economic Corridor project which links Thailand-Cambodia-Vietnam which covers Chong Sa-ngam - Allongway- Siam Reap provinces. The GMS project has proposed the 'Six Countries, One Destination' project which has Thailand as the Coordination Center to promote tourism.

It can be seen that when the permanent border crossing was opened, Sri Saket province is involved in three main operational aspects. These are border trade, tourism, and transportation linkages. The economic orientation of the project is based on the belief that tourism will lead to poverty alleviation. This can be enhanced by the opportunities of transportation linkages of 4 countries, namely Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam which enable Sri Saket province to accommodate tourists from all over the world to visit the Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom in Siam Reap province in Cambodia.

As Thailand's economic performance has slowed down considerably and continuously since 2008 due to one of the critical factors which is the rapidly increasing raw oil prices in the world market. The cost of production and cost of living have increased that the inflation rate also increased and significantly affected the private sector investment and consumer spending which slowed down continuously. The government has made an effort to develop various approaches to solve such problems especially the capacity building in export and tourism which are the important sectors generating revenues for Thailand.

Sri Saket province is the border province which has its border next to Cambodia about 135 kilometers apart. The people of the two countries have developed relations in various aspects for a long time. They communicated and visited each other, trade with each other since the long past and upto now. Furthermore, the spoken language, tradition, and culture are similar. All of these make Sri Saket a high potential to become the "Gate to Tourism of the Old Khmer" through Chong Sa-ngam Permanent Border Crossing.

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