

## Thailand, Japan sign bullet-train deal



Transport Minister Prajin Juntong and his Japanese counterpart Akihiro Ota sign a memorandum of understanding to cooperate on potential introduction of Japan's bullet-train technology in Thailand. (Kyodo photo)

Thailand and Japan on Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate on the possible introduction of Japan's shinkansen bullet-train technology into the kingdom.

Transport Minister Prajin Juntong and his Japanese counterpart Akihiro Ota signed the pact during talks in Tokyo. The agreement will enable the two countries to begin a feasibility study and evaluate demand and the profitability of a roughly 660-kilometre high-speed railway project linking Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

Tokyo and Bangkok are also expected to discuss specifics, such as the construction of routes and stations, Japanese officials said.

Tokyo is hoping the latest MoU with Bangkok will give a boost to its bid to export bullet train technology to India and other countries.

If realised, the cost of the project is expected to exceed 1 trillion yen (273 billion baht).

Major Japanese companies, such as East Japan Railway Co, Hitachi, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, and Mitsui & Co, are considering joining the project, according to the Japanese Transport Ministry.

Japan has been seeking to increase connectivity in Thailand and Malaysia at a time when members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) are trying to establish a more integrated Asean Economic Community in 2015.

In March, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and Japanese Premier Shinzo Abe agreed to speed bilateral talks on developing the railway sector in Thailand.

