



Nowadays, the Kunming-Bangkok Highway becomes busier. Various vehicles are running on it and there are even passenger buses from Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province to Houay Xai, Laos.

Photo by Lei Tongsu

Yunnan's North-South Road fully upgraded to expressway standards

The 1,032 km long North-South Road in Yunnan was recently upgraded to expressway standards.

Planning and construction of the North-South Expressway began with the Songming-Kunming Expressway (Yunnan's No.1 Expressway) whose construction started in September 1994. After years of construction, most of the sections had been upgraded to expressway standards, but there were still some sections that were secondary roads. In 2012, Yunnan began to upgrade the entire North-South Road to expressway standards, expecting to complete construction in three years.

The upgrade of the Road to expressway standards provides a continuous expressway link between Funing County in south Yunnan and Shuifu County in the north. It extends north to the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Zone and the Yangtze River Economic Belt, and stretches south to the Pearl River Delta Economic Zone and the Beibu Gulf Economic Zone. And it will provide a strong impetus to Yunnan's efforts to build centres whose spheres of influence extend across South Asia and Southeast Asia.

(Li Chenghan)

Kunming-Bangkok Highway boosts regional cooperation

What kind of change has the Kunming-Bangkok Highway brought to regions along it? What are the challenges? With these questions in mind, "Depicting Our Kunming-Bangkok Highway" reporter team recently came to the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University in Thailand to "seek a diagnosis and prescription".

"The Kunming-Bangkok Highway is a road that brings new opportunities to China, Laos and Thailand and all of Southeast Asia. It not only boosts cooperation between China and Thailand, but also drives the development of neighboring countries." Professor Ukrist

Pathmanand, Deputy Director of the Institute of Asian Studies said.

Ukrist told us that in recent years, the Highway had spurred a tourism boom in northern Thailand with many Chinese tourists driving themselves to Thailand for holiday or sightseeing tours. This has led to the rapid development of the local hotel, retail and other related industries. "It links Yunnan and northern Thailand, but Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai are not industry clusters and many Thai commodities such as rice and fruits come from central and southern Thailand." He said that the ties between Kunming and Bangkok

were not close enough, but there was great potential to expand bilateral trade, and industrial parks and logistics centers should be set up and commodity production bases built along the Highway to further strengthen the ties between Kunming and Bangkok.

Director Nuanoi Treerat is more concerned with the condition of the Thai section of the Kunming-Bangkok Highway. She said that relatively few people in Bangkok drove themselves to Yunnan for sightseeing tours. It takes seven to eight hours to drive from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, which is very demanding on vehicles, so many people in Thailand

choose to travel by plane. "Many people in Chiang Rai choose Yunnan as their destination, but Chiang Rai has a population of only over one million, less than one-tenth of the capital Bangkok." She said that it was imperative to improve the condition of the Thai section.

Nuanoi said Institute of Asian Studies and Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences has set up a joint research team for the Kunming-Bangkok Highway in the hope of solving the problem of poor connectivity between the two countries through research on the development of logistics on the Kunming-Bangkok Highway.

(Wang Jing)



Photo News

Lahu women show off ethnic features in Beijing

Women of Lahu ethnic group from Lancang Lahu Autonomous County, Yunnan recently showed off their ethnic cooking skills at the China Ethnic Customs Exhibition held at China National Convention Center in Beijing.

(Photo by Pan Xu)

Track laying begins on Yunnan Section of Shanghai-Kunming HSR line



Photo by Hu Xiaorong

Recently, track laying officially began on the Yunnan section of the Shanghai-Kunming High-speed Passenger Railway, which will lay the foundation for the opening to traffic of the High-speed Railway by the end of this year.

The plan calls 382.9 kilometers of through tracks and 4.43 km of station tracks to be laid. It is understood that the track laying work is expected to complete in the first half of 2016, whereupon integrated testing and commissioning will commence.

The Shanghai-Kunming High-speed Passenger Railway is one of the high-speed passenger rail corridors included in China's Medium and Long-term Railway Network Planning. It is 2,264 kilometers long and has a design speed of 300 to 350 kilometers per hour. The Yunnan Section is expected to be operational by the end of next year. By then the travel time between Kunming and Shanghai will be reduced from the current more than 40 hours to about ten hours.

(Hu Xiaorong)

Mysteries of human evolution posed by "Red Deer Cave People" fossils (Part I)

Who were Red Deer Cave People?

Editor's Note: After several years of research, Chinese and Australian paleoanthropologists found that although the "Red Deer Cave People" who lived in Mengzi, Yunnan Province, China 14,000 years ago had existed up until the dawn of agricultural civilization, they retained many features of Homo habilis or Homo erectus. Who on earth were the "Red Deer Cave People"? Were they Homo habilis, Homo erectus or Homo sapiens?

Ji Xueping, lead researcher and director of the Department of Paleoanthropology of the Yunnan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology and Darren Curnoe, professor at the University of New South Wales, Australia published a paper in the U.S. journal PLOS ONE on December 17 last year, uncovering the mystery of the "Red Deer Cave People".

"Red Deer Cave People" were originally called "Mengzi People". Their fossils were first discovered in a quarry in Wenlan Town, Mengzi County, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province. Since a number of large deer fossils were also found in the cave, archaeologists later named the site "Red Deer Cave". Ancient humans once living there were in turn named "Red Deer Cave People".

In 2008, Ji Xueping and Curnoe set up a joint team to conduct a study of the "Red Deer Cave" human fossils that had been sealed in Mengzi for nearly 20 years.

Using Carbon-14 and other dating methods to precisely date owners of the fossils, Ji Xueping's team found the "Red Deer Cave People" had lived 14,000 years ago, but his team unexpectedly discovered that although the "Red Deer Cave People" lived during the age of anatomically modern humans (anatomically modern humans ushered in the dawn of modern humans), but the features retained in the skull and other fossils showed that they were more likely an earlier human species.

In 2012, Ji Xueping and Curnoe co-published an article in journal PLOS ONE. Based on their analysis of the skulls of the "Red Deer

Cave People", they concluded that although the "Red Deer Cave People" lived during the age of anatomically modern humans, they had the features of Archaic Homo sapiens that lived at least 100,000 years ago. This suggests a group of Archaic Homo sapiens had survived into the age of anatomically modern humans, spanning hundreds of thousands of years.

When the paper was published in 2012, it caused a sensation in the academic world. The "Red Deer Cave People" have been seen as another major breakthrough in the study of human origins and evolution after the discovery of "The Hobbit" in Indonesia in 2003.

On December 17, 2015, Ji Xueping and Curnoe published another paper containing the results of their study of a femur from the "Red Deer Cave People" in PLOS ONE. The research once again drew attention from many mainstream media outlets and academic institutions in Europe and the United States.

This time they found that although the owner of the femur lived during the age of anatomically modern humans, it had the features of Homo habilis and Homo erectus. This means that the owners' features spanned a longer period of time, possi-



Femur and CT image of "Red Deer Cave People" Provided by Yunnan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology

bly one million years, two million years, or even longer.

"Three years ago, we studied the skull discovered. Then we found the features of Archaic Homo sapiens that lived 100,000 years ago," Ji Xueping said in an interview with reporters, "But today, after studying the femur, we found that the owner of the femur still retained many features of Homo habilis and Homo erectus. This seems to suggest that although the owner of the skull and the owner of the femur both came from the "Red Deer Cave", they probably did not belong to the same species."

"This will open up a very interesting area of research. Why did different species of ancient human live in the same geographic space in the same period?" Ji Xueping asked.

(Lin Shuo)