

WORLD'S LONGEST BRIDGE BUILT IN CHINA

London : China has set a new record after constructing the world's longest bridge over water.

The newly constructed 26.4 miles-long Qingdao Haiwan Bridge would easily cross the English Channel and is almost 3 miles longer than the previous record holder, the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway in the American state of Louisiana.

The three-way Qingdao Haiwan Bridge is a staggering 174 times longer than London's Tower Bridge, over the Thames River – and shaves 19 miles off the drive from Qingdao to Huangdao.

That the structure features two bridges running side by side and is 23.87 miles (38.42 km) long.

Built in just four years at a cost of 5.5 billion pounds, the sheer scale of the bridge reveals the advances made by Chinese engineers in recent years will be open for use in the New Year and is almost three miles longer than the previous record holder, the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway in Louisiana.

The six-lane road bridge is supported by more than 5,200 columns and was designed by the Shandong Gausu Group. Two separate groups of workers have been building the different ends of the structure since 2006.

At least 10,000 workers toiled in two teams around the clock to build the bridge, which was constructed from opposite ends and connected in the middle in the last few days.

The vast structure links the center of the booming port city of Qingdao in eastern China's Shandong Province with the suburb of Huangdao, spanning the wide blue waters of Jiaozhou Bay.

When it opens to traffic later this year, the bridge is expected to carry over 30,000 cars a day and will cut the commute between the city of Qingdao and the sprawling suburb of Huangdao by between 20 and 30 minutes.

Chinese officials said that the bridge would be strong enough to withstand a magnitude 8 earthquake, typhoons or the impact of a 300,000 tonne vessel.

One engineer commented. The computer models and calculations are all very well but you cannot really relax until the two sides are bolted together. "Even a few centimeters out would have been a disaster".

With an overall length of 42.58 km, the route between Qingdao and Huangdao will be shortened by 30 km, cutting the travel time by about 20 minutes.

However, the colossal construction is set to hold the record as the longest sea bridge only for a few years – and it will be bettered by another Chinese bridge in the next decade.

China is already home to 7 of the world's 10 longest bridges, including the world's lengthiest, the 102 miles Danyang-Kunshan Rail Bridge, which runs over land and water near Shanghai.

Last December officials announced workers had begun constructing a bridge to link Southern Guangdong province with Hong Kong and Macau.

(EIR / 19 February, 2011)