Nissibi Bridge boosts economy, tourism in southeastern Turkey

The Nissibi Euphrates Bridge, which connects several provinces in southeast Turkey, has provided a major boost to the local economy and tourism since its completion two years ago, according to local officials and residents.

The bridge spans the Atatürk Dam on the Euphrates River, links Şanlıurfa's Siverek and Adıyaman's Kahta districts and provides a key connection route for other provinces too.

With the retention of water at the Atatürk Dam in 1992, roads that connected Siverek and Kahta were submerged, reducing transportation options in the region to only ferries.

In an interview with Anadolu Agency (AA), Siverek Municipality Deputy Mayor Hacı Ahmet Öncül claimed that the bridge played a vital role in improving the region’s economy and tourism.

According to Öncül, the bridge improved the local economy by significantly reducing travel times in the region. Ferries, which were the main method of transportation before the bridge was completed, were inefficient both in terms of capacity and time.

“If you missed it, you would wait for hours,” Öncül said, adding that “Now you can cross the bridge in five minutes.” He said the bridge allowed local businesses to transport larger amounts of goods in shorter amounts of time.

The bridge also boosted local tourism, he added. Calling Euphrates “a hidden paradise,” Öncül said the region is now frequented by tourists from around the globe, predominantly from Japan and China, thanks to the bridge helping tour operators who had trouble crossing from Mount Nemrut to Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa before.

Abdulsamet Baytok, a truck driver who travels between Diyarbakır and Adıyaman, called the bridge “perfect” when speaking to AA. Baytok recalled losing lots of time traveling by ferry, claiming that they used to wait hours for the ferries before the completion of the bridge.

“Transportation has become easier,” he said.

The Nissibi Euphrates Bridge was completed after 37 months of work and opened with a ceremony attended by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2015.

The cable-stayed bridge, which is 610-meters-long and 24.5-meters-wide, cost TL 80 million ($34 million) to build. The bridge also has 96-meter-high pylons and a central span of 400 meters. The bridge is the third-longest suspension bridge in Turkey after the July 15 Martyrs and Fatih Sultan Mehmet bridges, which connect the European and Asian sides of Istanbul.

Twenty years after Atatürk Dam was built, the foundation of the bridge, which is described as "the Bosporus Bridge of Southeastern Anatolia," was laid on Feb. 26, 2012, by the Transportation, Maritime and Communications Ministry, on the instruction of then-Prime Minister Erdoğan. Passing through Adıyaman, which was previously known as the "blind street," provides access for the provinces of Bitlis, Siirt, Şırnak, Batman, Mardin, Van and Diyarbakır to western provinces.