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BRIDGE (SPECIAL REPORT)

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BY BAHARA HAJI KAMARAK 85

(9)

PULAU PINANG, JULY 29 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD WILL DRIVE OVER TO PULAU PINANG ON SATURDAY, PAVING THE WAY FOR ACCESS TO THE ISLAND ALSO BY ROAD, ACROSS THE WORLD'S THIRD LONGEST BRIDGE -- THE NEW PENANG BRIDGE.

HE WILL MAKE THE HISTORIC CRUISE ACROSS THE \$850 MILLION BRIDGE SPANNING 13.5 KM IN A PROTON SAGA, MALAYSIA'S OWN CAR, AND EXPERIENCE THE REALITY THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE HAD STARTED TALKING OF WAY BACK IN 1940.

THE BRIDGE, BUILT IN THREE YEARS AND THREE MONTHS, WILL BE OPENED TO THE PUBLIC ON SEPT 15.

CONSTRUCTION STARTED ON APRIL 9, 1982 WHEN DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR HIMSELF PERFORMED THE GROUND-BREAKING AT THE ISLAND END OF THE BRIDGE IN BATU UBAN NEAR THE UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA.

THE HYUNDAI ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION COMPANY OF SOUTH KOREA BUILT THE BRIDGE, ORIGINALLY ESTIMATED TO COST \$744 MILLION, AND COMPLETED IT ON JULY 15 THIS YEAR. -- MORE

1404MST 29 07 85

#### BRIDGE 2 PULAU PINANG (SPECIAL REPORT)

THE NEED FOR A BRIDGE WAS VOICED WHEN THE FERRY SERVICE PROVED UNABLE TO COPE WITH THE INCREASING DEMAND FROM THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC.

AMONG THE PROPOSALS PUT FORWARD AT THAT TIME WERE THE LAUNCHING OF A SECOND FERRY SERVICE AND THE BUILDING OF AN UNDERWATER TUNNEL OR BRIDGE.

HOWEVER BY THE END OF THE 1950S AND EARLY 1960S THE IDEA OF A BRIDGE SEEMED TO HAVE WON MORE SUPPORT FROM THE PEOPLE OF PULAU PINANG AND AFTER A DECADE OR SO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT UNDER PRIME MINISTER DATUK (LATER TUN) HUSSEIN ONN BEGAN DISCUSSING THE PROJECT.

THE BRIDGE, THE PRIDE OF MALAYSIANS IN GENERAL AND THE PEOPLE OF PULAU PINANG IN PARTICULAR WAS CONSTRUCTED UNDER NINE PHASES.

PHASE ONE INVOLVED LAND RECLAMATION WORKS WHILE PHASES THREE, FOUR AND FIVE INVOLVED THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BRIDGE PROPER WHICH HAS FOUR LANES THAT COULD BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE TWO ADDITIONAL LANES

PHASES SIX AND SEVEN INVOLVED THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE JUNCTION AT 9KM BUTTERWORTH-IPOH ROAD WHILE PHASES EIGHT AND NINE INVOLVED THE BUILDING OF THE TOLL PLAZAS. -- MORE

1320MST 29 07 85

BRIDGE 3 PULAU PINANG (SPECIAL REPORT)

A 1.5KM VIADUCT WAS BUILT ON THE ISLAND END OF THE BRIDGE WHILE A 3.6 KM FLYOVER WAS BUILT ON THE MAINLAND SIDE IN PERAI. THE 225-METRE SUPPORTING BEAMS ALLOW 50,000 TONNE SHIPS TO PASS UNDERNEATH.

ACCORDING TO CONSTRUCTION CONSULTANT TAN SRI PROF CHIN FUNG KEE, THE BRIDGE WOULD BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND EARTHQUAKE SHOCKS AS NATURAL RUBBER HAD BEEN USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION TO TAKE HEAVY PRESSURE.

THE BRIDGE WOULD BE NOT ONLY A TOURIST ATTRACTION BUT ALSO A MAJOR REVENUE EARNER FOR THE STATE WITH AN ESTIMATED \$100 MILLION TO COLLECTED ANNUALLY IN TOLLS.

APART FROM ITS ECONOMIC BENEFITS, THE BRIDGE ALSO HELPED IN TRANSFERRING TECHNICAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE FROM SOUTH KOREA TO ABOUT 2,000 MALAYSIAN WORKERS. -- MORE

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BRIDGE 4 PULAU PINANG (SPECIAL REPORT)

THE BRIDGE IS CONNECTED TO THE NORTH-SOUTH HIGHWAY BY A ROAD LEADING TO IT FROM PERAI.

WORKS MINISTER DATUK S. SAMY VELLU EXPECTS AT LEAST 22,000 VEHICLES EXCLUDING MOTORCYCLES TO USE THE BRIDGE DAILY.

HE ALSO SAID TOLLS WOULD NOT POSE A BURDEN TO BRIDGE USERS AS THE RATES WOULD BE SIMILAR TO THAT CHARGED BY THE PENANG PORT

COMMISSION (PPC) FOR THE FERRY SERVICE.

THIS HOWEVER DID NOT MEAN THAT PPC WOULD NOT INCREASE THE RATES FOR THE FERRY SERVICE AS IT HAD BUILT 14 COLLECTION BOOTHS AT THE SULTAN ABDUL HALIM FERRY TERMINAL AND HAD UNDERTAKEN IMPROVEMENT WORK TO IT AT A COST OF \$1.5 MILLION

AT PRESENT THE FERRY FARE FOR VEHICLES IS BETWEEN \$4 AND \$6 DEPENDING ON ENGINE POWER WHILE BETWEEN \$8 AND \$48 ARE CHARGED FOR LORRIES DEPENDING ON THEIR LADENWEIGHT. -- BERNAMA

1413MST 29 07 85