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PULAU PINANG, AUG 3 (BERNAMA) -- A 40-YEAR-OLD DREAM OF A PERMANENT LINK BETWEEN PULAU PINANG ISLAND AND THE MAINLAND WAS REALISED TODAY WHEN DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD BECAME THE FIRST PERSON TO DRIVE ACROSS THE PULAU PINANG BRIDGE.

THE PRIME MINISTER MADE THE HISTORIC TRIP ACROSS THE \$850 MILLION BRIDGE, AT 13.5 KM THE WORLD'S THIRD LONGEST AND ASIA'S LONGEST, IN A RED PROTON SAGA -- MALAYSIA'S OWN CAR.

INSIDE THE CAR WITH HIM WERE DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH, WORKS MINISTER DATUK S. SAMY VELLU, PULAU PINANG CHIEF MINISTER DR LIM CHONG EU AND HEAVY INDUSTRIES CORPORATION OF MALAYSIA (HICOM) PRESIDENT TAN SRI JAMIL JAN.

THE PRIME MINISTER DROVE THE CAR FROM THE ISLAND END OF THE BRIDGE IN JALAN UDINI AT 8.30 AM AND REACHED THE MIDDLE FIVE KILOMETRES AWAY IN 10 MINUTES.

HERE, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR STOPPED FOR A WHILE TO INSPECT THE BRIDGE. DATUK SAMY VELLU BRIEFED HIM ON THE BRIDGE WHICH WILL BE OFFICIALLY OPENED FOR PUBLIC USE BY PULAU PINANG YANG DIPERTUA NEGERI TUN DR HAJI AWANG HASSAN ON SEPT 15. -- MORE
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR AND HIS WIFE WERE RECEIVED AT THE MID-WAY POINT BY DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE MALAYSIAN HIGHWAY AUTHORITY DATUK HAJI MUSTAFFA AHMAD AND SENIOR OFFICIALS OF HYUNDAI CONSTRUCTION AND ENGINEERING COMPANY OF SOUTH KOREA, THE MAIN BUILDERS OF THE BRIDGE.

DATUK SAMY VELLU PRESENTED A PEWTER PLATE WITH A PICTURE OF THE BRIDGE TO DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR AND DR LIM CHONG EU.

DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH LATER THEN TOOK OVER THE WHEEL OF THE PROTON SAGA WITH THE PRIME MINISTER SITTING BESIDE HER AND DROVE FROM THE MID-WAY POINT OF THE BRIDGE TO SEBERANG JAYA ON THE MAINLAND.

ACCOMPANYING THE PRIME MINISTER IN OTHER CARS WERE EDUCATION MINISTER DATUK ABDULLAH HAJI AHMAD BADAWI, AGRICULTURE MINISTER ENCIK ANWAR IBRAHIM, DEPUTY WORKS MINISTER DATUK HAJI ZAINAL ABIDIN ZIN DAN PULAU PINANG EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR AND DATUK PADUKA DATIN SERI DR SITI HASMAH ARE ON A TWO-DAY VISIT TO THE STATE FROM YESTERDAY. -- BERNAMA
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