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Bridge, road project to start by year's end

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JOHOR BARU, Tues. - Work on a RM1 billion infrastructure project to promote tourism and possibly develop a new State administrative capital along Johor River is scheduled to begin by the end of the year.

The massive project comprises a 4.5km bridge across the river at a cost of RM750 million and 25km of highway on both sides of the river costing RM250 million.

This will be linked to existing road networks and will markedly reduce travelling time from either the city or Senai airport to Desaru holiday resort and other destinations on Johor's east coast.

The State Government is also looking at relocating its administrative capital to what is tentatively known as Johor Perdana along the Johor River.

State Housing, Small and Medium-Scale Industries and Local Government Committee chairman Adam Abdul Hamid said today that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had given his approval to the RM1 billion project.

Adam said the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department was preparing a Cabinet report on the project.

He was speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing of memorandums of understanding between Universiti Teknologi Malaysia's Institut Sultan Iskandar and three companies.

During the ceremony, ISI signed three MoUs - with Urus Zaman Holdings Sdn Bhd, Pembangunan Semenanjung Selatan Sdn Bhd and Campenon Bernard SGE of France.

Under the MoUs, the companies agreed to sponsor studies by ISI, an institute established as a company in 1991 by UTM to undertake basic and applied research over a wide range of fields related to the urban habitat.

The RM4 million sponsorship by Urus Zaman Holdings will be for a study on the Johor River basin which is relatively undeveloped and contains large tracts of mangrove vegetation.

Its main objective is to prepare and present a viable plan for the development of the basin, taking into account its ecological value and economic potential, particularly for tourism-based activities.

The plan may also serve as development guidelines, thus providing direction for the State authorities in endeavouring future development options for the basin.

The RM3 million sponsorship by Pembangunan Semenanjung Selatan is for the Pontian district development plan.

The ISI study will seek to identify opportunities for new economic development within Pontian district and to locate these within a broad structural framework of optimum land use and supporting infrastructure.

Under the third MoU, ISI and Campenon Bernard SGE will embark on collaborative works and have dialogues with each other to provide value added services to R&D logistics.

Campenon Bernard will also facilitate the establishing of a Research Chair at ISI and promote co-relationship between ISI and the European Commission in Brussels and the European Investment Bank in Luxemburg.

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