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Landbridge project will proceed despite currency turmoil

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THE proposed RM10 billion landbridge project linking the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia and southern Thailand will continue despite the currency turmoil.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that the project, which will not be too costly to undertake, will continue as it has already been implemented and will take time to complete.

"We are not poverty stricken to the extent we cannot do anything at all. We have never given an undertaking that we will not have any development until our currency recovers.

"What we have said is that what we cannot afford, we will not do and what we can, we will continue," he told reporters after a question and answer session at the Global Panel in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The proposed landbridge project, linking Butterworth with Songkhla, would be implemented by the private sector under the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT). It would comprise four important components - a road, railway line, and crude oil and gas pipelines.

Dr Mahathir said if the Government ceases all economic developments, this is one sure way of causing a recession.

"If you don't have some economic activities, then a lot of people are going to be unemployed ... factories which produces building materials and cement plants will have to stop production ... that (situation) will move (us) towards a recession.

"It is important that we implement projects that are already on the ground. As you can see, (the projects) are on-going in Kuala Lumpur which is causing traffic jams now.

"We will continue as far as we can with the money that we have. Of course, we are a little bit poorer now but we have ways and means of getting around this thing," he added.

Meanwhile Bernama reports a feasibility study for the Pan Asian railway line from Singapore to Kunming in China, is expected to be completed in April, next year, after which a special working committee will choose the route.

The feasibility study is still going on, said Dr Prodyut Dutt, principal assistant secretary at the Ministry of Transport.

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