

Kuching to be turned into metropolitan city

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KUCHING: The Sarawak capital will be turned into a metropolitan city with a population of at least 1.5 million people by 2020.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said the state would link all corners of Kuching, from Santubong to Bau and Samarahan, so that the entire region would become a metropolitan city.

"We expect that by 2020, Kuching will have at least 1.5 million people who will come from all over the state," he said at the launch of a RM150mil lock and barrage project on the Sarawak River by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

Taib said the state had implemented a good net-

work of roads linking the four corners of Kuching.

"However, Kuching has a lot of rivers which hinder communication," he said.

The river project was vital as it would link the Sejingkat industrial zone to Kuching city via a bridge, he added.

State Infrastructure Development and Communications Minister Datuk Wong Soon Koh, in his speech, said that with the completion of the lock and barrage project, rapid growth could take place in the region.

"The project will also ensure that the water level for the Sarawak River can be regulated.

"It will also cut off saline contamination from

the sea and reduce flooding in Kuching aside from preventing flow of muddy sediments to the Damai and Santubong holiday resorts and beaches," he added.

Wong noted that 80% of the design and construction of the project were handled by locals.