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Green light for State's request to build highway

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KUALA TERENGGANU, Fri. - The Federal Government has accepted a request by the Terengganu Government to build the RM3.5 billion East Coast highway simultaneously in Terengganu and Pahang.

Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had directed the Economic Planning Unit to study the request and assess Terengganu's capability to assist the consortium, headed by the Malaysia Mining Corporation Bhd, to carry out the project.

"Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad put forward the request and agreed to assist the consortium so that the work to build the 336-kilometre highway, from Chendering through Jabor to Kuantan and from Karak to Kuantan, can begin at the same time with no further delay.

"Wan Mokhtar told me that the highway is important for Terengganu's economic development as it will attract more tourists and also invite investments to several new development areas to be opened once the highway is completed," he said.

The minister said the project was scheduled for completion in three years.

Speaking after launching the State MIC convention today, Samy Vellu said the mega project would be carried out before the end of the year. Terengganu and Pahang have also agreed to expedite the process of land acquisition involved in the project once the contract was signed.

To save cost, he said, no new construction machinery would be purchased to build the highway.

"A study had been conducted which shows that a project would lose between 25 and 30 per cent of its contract money to buy new imported machinery.

"The Government has directed construction companies to use the existing machinery and local construction materials in their projects, including the construction of the East Coast Highway, to avoid wastage," he said.

The consortium, which is headed by MMC, comprises MTD Capital Bhd and United Engineers Malaysia Bhd.

On the water issue, Samy Vellu said the Government had spent about RM216 million to fix new pipelines and to expedite the construction of new water treatment plants.

With the completion of the various projects to improve Klang Valley's water supply system, the people could enjoy an additional 1,003 million litres of water per day.

He said he would visit the RM136 million Wangsa Maju water treatment plant, which was scheduled to be completed yesterday, either on Monday or Tuesday.

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