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Long-term plan to turn Kuching into modern city

KUCHING, Thurs. - The RM150 million Sungai Sarawak Regulation Scheme, the first of its kind in the State, is meant not only as a river regulation project but forms part of the State Government's long-term programme to turn Kuching into a modern metropolitan city.

Basically, the SSRS comprises three elements, namely a barrage of five radial gates controlling the river, a 125m-long by 25m-wide ship lock, and a 435m-long four-lane road bridge over both barrage and lock.

Minister for Infrastructure Development and Communications Datuk Wong Soon Koh said the SSRS project formed part of the Kuching Outer Ring road system, which is a system of roads built on the outer periphery of the city to minimise traffic volume in the city centre.

He said phase one of the project started in 1992 with the construction of the Bako causeway across the Sungai Sarawak. It links Petra Jaya to the bustling Demak Laut industrial estate (formerly known as Sejingkat).

Phase two involves the construction of the barrage-cum-bridge and the final phase is a rock fill dam at Jalan Keruing to connect Pending to Demak Laut.

Wong said with the barrage, it was now possible to reduce occurrences of flash floods in the city, cut saline intrusion into the Batu Kitang water catchment area, regulate the Sungai Sarawak river level and prevent flow of muddy sediments to the Santubong peninsula which is a tourism area.

The SSRS, about 10km from the city, was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this morning.

Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said by the year 2020, the city itself was expected to be home to some 1.5 million people and as such proper planning had to be done now so that the place could develop in an orderly manner. The city's population is around 400,000.

Among those present at the function were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Puan Sri Laila Taib and Deputy Chief Ministers Tan Sri Alfred Jabu anak Numpang and Datuk Dr George Chan Hong Nam.

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