

PM: Make sure bridge is ready by 2011

• **By Sharanjit Singh
and Marina Emmanuel**
news@nst.com.my

BUKIT MERTA JAM: The RM3 billion Penang Second Bridge will be open to traffic by January 2011.

It is one of three main projects identified for Penang in the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he wanted, everyone involved in the project to ensure there were no delays in its implementation.

"I want this bridge to be built on time. The UEM Group has also made this promise to me and I want it to be fulfilled.

"I don't want excuses such as sub-contractors not delivering or anything else to delay the project," he said, adding that efforts must also be made to ensure there were no cost over-runs.

Abdullah also directed Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon to fast-track all approvals relating to the project.

He said this would prevent additional costs.

"I am stressing this as we have planned the project meticulously and there should be no hiccups in its implementation."

He was speaking at the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the 24km bridge which will link Batu Mating on the island and Batu Kawan on the mainland.

The Batu Kawan-Batu Mating alignment will link motorists to the North-South Expressway on the mainland and the Bayan Lepas Highway on Penang island.

The bridge is expected to enhance the potential of development projects planned for the northern corridor which will bring multiple spillover effects to not only Penang and Seberang Prai but also northern Perak, Kedah and Perlis.

Yesterday's event was witnessed by Koh, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Effendi Norwawi and UEM Group chairman Datuk Abu Hassan Kendut.

Acknowledged as one of the most important projects to be implemented under the 9MP, the bridge will be built by the UEM Group, a government-linked company under Khazanah Nasional.

Abdullah said the ceremony reflected the government's commitment in rolling out projects that had been announced under the 9MP. "It shows that we have not made an empty promise. Whatever we have promised we will deliver.

Meanwhile, in his speech, Abu Hassan said the second bridge project would see UEM introducing vendor development programmes, particularly for Bumiputeras from Penang.

He said the company wanted to utilise the

It shows that we have not made an empty promise. Whatever we have promised we will deliver.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

services of local consultants and contractors for at least 60 per cent of the construction costs of the project.

"We also plan to procure at least 70 per cent of local construction and design materials for the aesthetic components of the bridge," he said.

"UEM's forte in infrastructure development and its core expertise in a multitude of key industry sectors will ensure the successful construction of the bridge, as we want to provide opportunities to our workforce in realising a project of this magnitude."