

WEST COAST HIGHWAY GETS GO-AHEAD

RM3.12 billion project to
link Banting and Taiping

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KUALA LUMPUR: The West Coast Highway project, to help ease traffic flow along expressways and trunk roads between Perak and Selangor, is on.

The project, mooted in 1996 but put on hold because of the Asian financial crisis, is expected to cost RM3.12 billion and link Banting and Taiping.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the decision to resume the project, covering 215.8km, was made at yesterday's Cabinet meeting.

"The project will be given to the original contractors awarded 11 years ago," he said.

Najib says Cabinet made the decision yesterday

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New highway ready in 2014

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Concessionaires for the project, touted to be the alternative to the North-South Highway, include Kumpulan Europlus Bhd.

A source said the project was expected to start by the end of this year.

"The highway will run parallel to the North-South Expressway with linkages to several major towns, which will give motorists an option to switch highways," said the official.

The highway, which is scheduled to be completed in 2014, will pass through Banting, Klang, Tapah, Asam Jawa, Tanjung Karang, Sabak Bernam, Teluk Intan, Air Tawar, Kampung Gajah, Bruas and Taiping.

The toll rates on the new highway are expected to be similar to the rates on the North-South Expressway.

Kumpulan Europlus was awarded the contract in 1996, but the project did not take off.

Two million cars pack the North-South Expressway during the festive

and holiday seasons doubling and, sometimes tripling, travel time.

The new highway can help ease the situation.

The source added that the contractor, Konsortium LPB Sdn Bhd, was expected to take three years to complete the Selangor stretch and four years to finish the Perak stretch.

Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu had said in November that the Economic Planning Unit would re-submit a working paper on the project to the Cabinet.

Meanwhile, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohd Effendi Norwawi said the Economic Planning Unit would hold a meeting soon with the concessionaires.

"We will not be wasting any more time. We will call them for a meeting to discuss the details of the project," said Effendi.

The original cost of the highway was RM6 billion, but under a revised plan by the EPU, the project would cost over RM3 billion.

