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Najib: It's a Federal priority

Sarawak coastal road link an economic necessity, says PM

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Proud achievement: Najib together with (from left) Fadillah, Abang Johari and Nancy enjoying the view from the Batang Sadong Bridge after the opening ceremony of the bridge.

KUCHING: The proposed Sarawak coastal road network, which will alter the economic landscape of the state's coastal areas, is a Federal Government priority.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said three major bridges at a combined cost of RM1.4bil would connect the coastal road from the state's southern tip of Sematan all the way to the Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (Score) growth nodes.

"It is the Government's vision within the next few years to complete two main road networks in Sarawak, which is the Pan Borneo Highway and the coastal highway.

"We are committed to building these bridges. Once the coastal highway and Pan Borneo are completed, it will change the economic landscape of Sarawak," the Prime Minister said when opening the Batang Sadong Bridge at Sadong Jaya in Simunjan, about 100km from here yesterday.

Of the proposed bridges, the Federal Government has approved the building of the Batang Lupar Bridge at a cost of RM1bil,

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Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak

with construction scheduled to begin in early 2018.

Spanning 5km across the Batang Lupar River, the bridge is set to become the longest built across a river in the country. The cost of the project is to be shared with the state.

Two other projects, the RM300mil Batang Igan Bridge and RM130mil

Batang Rambungan Bridge, are in the planning stages.

The 1.48km Batang Sadong Bridge, completed in October, is presently the longest bridge across a river in the country.

Built at a cost of RM231mil, the project was completed two weeks ahead of schedule and at RM12mil less than the initial cost estimate, Najib said.

He recalled that he had spontaneously approved the building of the bridge during his walkabout in the area back in 2011.

The bridge will spur economic activity in agriculture, aquaculture and tourism, and benefit some 50,000 people in Asajaya and Sebuyau to Simunjan.

Najib said another project approved to complete the coastal route alignment included the RM112mil Batang Samarahan Bridge, which has reached 52% progress and expected to be completed in early 2018.

"The Government is also planning to build bridges at Batang Saribas, Muara Lassa and Batang Paloh in the future to complete the coastal road network.

"These projects are proof of the Government's commitment to developing the rural areas, through the building of a safe and comfortable road network to stimulate economic growth," he added.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem said the bridges would change the landscape in the state's coastal areas.

The Batang Lupar Bridge would spur economic growth from Sebuyau to Sri Aman and Betong, while the Batang Igan Bridge will benefit folks in Mukah and Matu.

The Rambungan Bridge is important for the people in Sematan-Lundu and Sampadi areas, he said, adding that the bridges would improve the socio-economy of folks living in coastal areas.

Adenan's speech was read out by Sarawak Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg.

Works Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri, who is the Batang Sadong MP, were also present.