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PM: Project will continue

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S'wak portion of Pan-Borneo Highway not affected by economy

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KUCHING: Sarawak's portion of the Pan-Borneo Highway, which is under construction, will not be affected due to the slowing economy.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak gave this assurance yesterday as he launched Package Three of the highway which involves the 75km stretch from Serian to Pantu.

And the Prime Minister had sweeter news – no toll will be imposed.

"The price of oil and commodities can drop. But this Pan-Borneo project we will definitely honour.

"The toll component will be left out. It will not be introduced," he said at the launching ceremony in Serian.

The Prime Minister said the Federal Government would adhere to the toll-free policy of Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem.

The package will include 10 bridges, a rest stop and 84 bus stops. The Sarawak portion of the highway is 1,089km and divided into 12 packages.

Two other stretches, in Bintulu and Sematan, are also being built.

Najib said the multiplier effect of the highway was estimated at eight times.

The Sarawak portion is estimated at RM16bil.



Start of a journey: Najib at the launch of Package Three of the Pan-Borneo highway which involves the 75km stretch from Serian to Pantu.

"So it will be RM16bil x eight – that's the benefit to Sarawak's economy. Just try to imagine ... the amount won't even fit here!" he quipped.

A joint-venture between Kimlun Corp Bhd and Zecon Bhd bagged the RM1.46bil third package.

Najib called the highway a game changer for the state, comparing it

to how railways transformed the United States' wild west centuries ago.

Earlier, Adenan praised Najib as the "best Prime Minister to Sarawak".

Not only had Najib been to Sarawak 47 times since becoming Prime Minister in 2009, building the highway was also a pledge made by

him, the Chief Minister revealed.

"Who is the PM who keeps coming? His name should be Najib Anak Razak," Adenan said, referring to the Iban naming convention.

"The ones before never came so many times, including a prime minister of 22 years ... his name is like Mahathir or something. We can't call him Mahathir Anak Mohamad."