

NEW RANTAU PANJANG-SG GOLOK CROSSING

'2ND SUNGAI GOLOK BRIDGE A BOON'

Malaysia, Thai PMs agree to expedite bridge construction and tackle flooding in area

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his Thai counterpart, Srettha Thavisin, agree that a second Rantau Panjang-Sungai Golok bridge will be a major boost to the regional economy.

The leaders decided to expedite the bridge's construction and to address flooding in northern Peninsular Malaysia and southern Thailand.

"We will develop and clean the Sungai Golok estuary to aid those in southern Thailand and Kelantan affected by floods."

Anwar said this during a luncheon in Rantau Panjang, Kelantan, as part of his working visit to the region and Sungai Golok, Thailand.

Srettha said southern Thailand

was underdeveloped due to "unnecessary problems", adding that this project would be a step forward.

"I hope to return to see progress in the Sungai Golok-Rantau Panjang area."

He said discussions with Anwar would include establishing an economic zone in the region, which both countries' foreign ministers would discuss.

Srettha suggested that the halal and rubber industries could drive the area's growth.

On Friday, Kelantan Public Works, Infrastructure, Water, and Rural Development Committee chairman Datuk Dr Izani Husin said Thailand planned to start construction of the bridge in April next year.

Narathiwat Governor Trakul Thotham said an environmental impact assessment, which would begin next month, must be done before construction could start.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim with his Thai counterpart, Srettha Thavisin, shaking hands in front of the Rantau Panjang Immigration, Customs, Quarantine and Security Complex yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

The new six-lane bridge, along with the Muhibbah Bridge, would be known as the Twin Bridges.

Anwar said the second bridge, initially scheduled to be completed in 2027, could be ready by the end of 2026 if the tender process was expedited.

He gave an assurance that speeding up the process, which would involve 10 Malaysian and 10 Thai companies, would not compromise on quality.

The 658km Malaysian-Thai land boundary traverses 552km of mountains and runs 106km along Sungai Golok.

Anwar said the Muhibbah Bridge, built in 1971, would be upgraded after the new crossing was completed.

He said the government would provide funds to dredge and deepen the Sungai Golok estuary to solve flood issues in Kelantan.

"I informed the Thai prime minister that as long as the estuary was not dredged, water will

overflow and affect Kelantan and surrounding areas in Narathiwat.

"We have witnessed this issue year after year.

"(Foreign Minister) Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan and his Thai counterpart will meet on Tuesday, and this is one of the topics that will be discussed.

"Both prime ministers have agreed to expedite the process from a policy perspective.

"And once it is resolved at the technical level, we will allocate funds to dredge and clean the river to prevent obstructions to water flowing to the sea," he said.

He said projects shared by the two countries signalled efforts to ensure development in northern Peninsular Malaysia and southern Thailand.

In December last year, Kelantan Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Mohamed Fadzli Hassan said delays in the Sungai Golok flood mitigation project had contributed to floods in Rantau Panjang.