

**Padma Bridge Will Enhance Malaysia-Bangladesh Bilateral Ties At A Higher Lever,
Says Malaysian PM
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 10 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Bangladesh on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for collaboration in the construction of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge, the largest bridge to be built in Bangladesh, witnessed by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak.

Najib said the bridge, when completed, would enhance Malaysia-Bangladesh bilateral relations at a higher level.

The MoU was signed by Malaysia's Special Envoy for Infrastructure to India and South Asia S. Samy Vellu on behalf of the Malaysian Government while Communications Minister Obaidul Quader represented the Bangladesh Government.

At the signing ceremony, Najib spoke over the telephone with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina about the US\$2.9 billion bridge project.

"I spoke with the Prime Minister of Bangladesh just now. She was proud that we could sign the MoU as this project is very historical and meaningful, and upon realisation, insyaallah (God willing), will increase the relations between Malaysia and Bangladesh at a higher level," he told reporters after witnessing the MoU signing.

"After this, we would deal with the IDB (Islamic Development Bank) and ADB (Asian Development Bank) on the financing aspect. When we have identified the contractors, there will be a ground-breaking ceremony and I hope to be present together with the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

"The financing will be finalised with the institutions concerned at preferential interest rates," Najib said.

In selecting the contractors for the project, Najib said they would be put through a process and the best contractors would be selected based on their capabilities and capacity.

"It's being worked out. After this MoU, we will work out the details and will inform the press," he added.

Under the MoU, the Malaysian Government will form a consortium of Malaysian companies to implement the project on a build, operate, own and transfer concession basis.

Construction of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge, which will be carried out entirely by a Malaysian consortium, is scheduled to commence this year and is expected to be completed in 54 months.

The bridge, the first fixed river crossing for road traffic in Bangladesh, will connect the south-western region to the rest of Bangladesh to stimulate economic growth by facilitating

inter-regional, cross-river transport of passengers and freight, transmission of natural gas, telecommunications and electricity in a cost-effective manner.

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