

Bintulu's 'Golden Gate Bridge' a catalyst for growth



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BINTULU: The Bintulu-Jepak cable-stayed bridge spanning over 1.2km across the Kemena River will, upon its completion, become Bintulu town's own version of the iconic Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.

Costing over RM460 million, the Bintulu-Jepak bridge will certainly be a unique addition to Bintulu's landscape, and bring about holistic socio-economic development and rural integration as envisioned by Sarawak Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg.

The premier, who performed the earth-breaking for the bridge in July 2019, described the project as a 'Sarawak Independence Day gift' to the local populace.

Expected to be completed by this year end, the bridge and its accompanying 3.5km road were designed according to the Public Works Department's (JKR) U5 Standard specifications.

The project involves the construction of a four-lane dual carriageway, including a flyover connecting Jalan Ahmad Zaidi, Jalan Tun Razak

and Jalan Abang Galau.

Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport Sarawak chairman Dr Abdul Kuddus Ramlee said the bridge would benefit the local people primarily through improved connectivity and access to essential services.

"The bridge will provide a more efficient and reliable transportation route for the local communities, allowing them easier access to healthcare facilities, schools, markets, and other essential services," he said.

Through better connectivity, this would facilitate the movement of goods and people, opening up new markets and business opportunities, thus, giving a boost to economic growth and improved livelihoods, he said.

"This bridge will not only improve quality of life but also enhance emergency response capabilities in the area," he said.

Assoc Prof Dr Mohamad Maulana Magiman, 56, of the Faculty of Humanities, Management and Science from Universiti Putra Malaysia Bintulu Campus (UPMKB) viewed the importance of such infrastructure in helping to empower the local communities to create their own economic opportunities.



Photo of the Bintulu-Jepak bridge, which is slated for completion this year end, taken from Bintulu Waterfront Promenade.



Dr Abdul Kuddus Ramlee

He suggested that areas in the vicinity of the bridge be developed by having food courts or kiosks, similar to those at Kuching Waterfront.

"However, the idea of setting up stalls and night market in the area should be carefully planned to maintain its cleanliness," he cautioned.

The academician, who chairs the Pehin Sri Adenan Satem Research Chair at UPMKB, also opined that Jepak should have its own identity which reflects the town's natural,



Dr Mohamad Maulana Magiman

historical and socio-cultural characteristics.

This could attract visitors or tourists to Jepak, and such efforts in creating identification and preservation of local identity ought to involve the local community and the Jepak think tank group, he added.

"The Jepak community should have short- and long-term plans because if these opportunities are not seized, the economic spillover will definitely go to other parties,"

he said.

For local businessman Yek Siew Liong, he hopes the bridge will be a catalyst for Bintulu town's urban renewal.

"I am happy that it will significantly shorten the travel time from Bintulu town to Bintulu Airport, and I also hope the road access from the bridge to the airport from the coastal roads will be upgraded upon the completion of the bridge," he said.

Businesswoman Maraini Jaafar, 56, said she is grateful the Sarawak government had gone through with the construction of the much-awaited bridge, and also credited the late Jepak assemblyman Datuk Talip Zulpilip for bringing development to the area.

As the bridge will be a new attraction in town, Maraini foresees road users parking along the road to snap photos

of the structure, potentially endangering the safety of other motorists.

"The relevant authority should be ready to carry out enforcement to prevent this," she added.

Besides promoting local tourism, she believed that this ease of accessibility could boost the gig economy and open doors to more job opportunities for the local people.

Community leader Pemanca Datuk Dr Francis Toh Chiew Peng, 65, agreed that the new Golden Gate-like bridge would definitely become a photo-worthy spot in Bintulu, drawing visitors and boosting the local economy.

"It will also cut short the travelling distance to Kampung Jepak, the new administration office, Bintulu Airport, Kuala Tatau, Balingian, Mukah, and all coastal towns," he added.