

RM35mil to upgrade stretch

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—ABDUL GHANI OTHMAN

Road at SouthKey project to be made four-lane dual-carriageway

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JOHOR BARU: The Federal Government has allocated a RM35mil facilitation fund to upgrade the stretch of Jalan Bakar Batu fronting the SouthKey project.

Mentri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the fund was channelled through the Private-Public Partnership Unit of the Prime Minister's Department.

He said the upgrading work to turn the 1.8km stretch into a four-lane dual-carriageway, would start in Sept and was expected to be completed in 2014.

"By then, motorists can expect smooth traffic flow along the stretch as it connects to other major highways," Abdul Ghani said at the launch of the SouthKey project recently.

The joint-venture project between Selia Pantai Sdn Bhd and the state-owned Kumpulan Prasarana Rakyat Johor, has a gross development value of RM13bil and will take 15 years to be fully developed.

The project is located on a 133ha site on the Majidee Army Camp area, and is dubbed the "the last remaining large prime development land" about 4km north of Johor Baru city centre.

He said presently many motorists used the 1.8km stretch to exit or enter the Tebrau Highway, Southern Link Expressway and the soon-to-be-opened Eastern Dispersal Link (EDL) Expressway.

On an unrelated matter, Abdul Ghani said the government would decide on the toll charges for the EDL within the next few weeks.

He said there still many issues that needed to be sorted out, including complaints from non-users that they would be subjected to toll charges.

Many questioned the rationale as to why the toll booth was built within the Bangunan Sultan Iskandar Customs, Immigration and Quarantine Complex (CIQ) and not at the end of the link.

The 8.1km highway was built by Malaysian Resources Corp Bhd and the link which ends before the CIQ has several exits including to Stulang Darat, Bakar Batu, Desa Pandan and Permas Jaya which are not tolled.

"In principle, only users should be charged for using the highway but in this case, both users and non-users have to pay the toll," said Abdul Ghani adding the highway would be opened for motorists on March 1.



Overall view: Abdul Ghani (centre) being briefed by SouthKey Properties Sdn Bhd executive director Quek Cham Hong (left) on the development of the project while the company's chairman Datuk Abdul Karim Ahmad Tardmizi looks on.