

75km expressway to Desaru opens



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The Senai-Desaru Expressway, which opened yesterday, includes a 4km bridge spanning Sungai Johor. It is free to use for one month, with tolls from July 10. PHOTO: THE NEW STRAITS TIMES

It cuts travel time from Second Link by half, say Malaysian officials

JOHOR BARU: Singaporeans heading to the beaches of Desaru now have a faster route, with the opening of a 75km highway yesterday.

The Senai-Desaru Expressway, costing RM1.4 billion (S\$571 million), will cut travelling time by half from the Johor side of the Second Link to Desaru, officials say.

Drivers would normally take about 2½ hours to travel from Gelang Patah to Desaru using trunk roads, the Malaysian Highway Authority (MHA) said.

The Expressway will reduce driving time to just an hour from the Malaysian side of the Second Link, the MHA's director-general Ismail Mohd Salleh was quoted as saying by The New Straits Times yesterday.

Another route Singaporeans take to Desaru includes entering busy Johor Baru town before heading west, also using meandering trunk roads.

The Expressway will allow Singaporeans to completely avoid getting stuck in heavy traffic in Johor Baru or the trunk roads.

They can enter Johor using the Second Link and head towards Senai airport before entering the Expressway. At 75km,

it is longer than the length of Singapore, which is 48km.

"The highway will change the skyline of southern Johor. It offers another option for commuters who want a hassle-free and fast journey," Mr Ismail told The New Straits Times.

For now, motorists will not have to pay to use the highway. Tolls will be charged from July 10. There is no indication of how much the tolls will be.

There are rest areas on both sides of the expressway. The project also includes a 4km bridge spanning Sungai Johor, one of the largest rivers in southern Malaysia.

Southern Johor, under the Iskandar

development region, is being upgraded, with the construction of leisure, residential and educational facilities.

The new highway is set to help revive tourism in Desaru, said Malaysia Tourist Guide Association president Jimmy Leong.

Johor Lorry Operators Association vice-chairman Leow Hock Tiap said the highway would benefit transport operators travelling from the north to the south, as they now have an alternative route into the Pasir Gudang industrial area.

Details about the Senai-Desaru Expressway can be found at www.e22.com.my