

# Manyin: Give Sarawak two-thirds of 11MP rural roads



KUCHING: The state hopes to get two-thirds of the 3,000km paved rural roads to be built for Sarawak and Sabah under the 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP), Infrastructure Development and Communications Minister Dato Sri Michael Manyin said.

He reasoned Sarawak was a vast area where many villages were still not accessible by road — a fact further reinforced by findings from a recent lab carried out by the ministry and relevant agencies which revealed the state needed another 5,000km of roads costing at least RM15 billion to RM20 billion.

“(Last Thursday) the Prime Minister announced under 11MP, there will be 3,000km of rural paved roads to be built in Sarawak and Sabah. We hope it would be divided by three —two-thirds for Sarawak and one third for Sabah.

“That is looking at the vast area (of Sarawak), because we have a total area of 124,448 square kilometres.

“But then again if it is realised, we still have many more roads to be built,” he said when speaking at the Association of Consulting Engineers Malaysia (ACEM) Sarawak branch 11th biennial dinner last Saturday.

Manyin also revealed Sarawak was exploring the possibility of building tunnels and elevated carriageways to provide linkage at rugged terrains such as in Kapit, Baram, Lubok Antu and other areas bordering Kalimantan, Indonesia.

He said for this purpose, officers from the state’s Public Works Department (JKR) had been sent to study the tunnels built in rural parts of South Korea and elevated carriageways in rural China.

Noting that such method was very costly, he challenged consulting engineers to help his ministry and JKR by using their speciality to minimise and cut the costs.

He also advised consulting engineers to incorporate elements that could prevent erosion and landslides when designing roads on slopes to prevent roads caving in like the one happened at Jalan Puncak Borneo earlier this year during rainy season.

Another challenge in building roads in Sarawak is at the coastal areas where there are many rivers and peat soils.

Manyin hoped consulting engineers would find ways to assist the government in countering the problem of building better road on peat soils, which could be 10m to 12m deep in some parts of the state.

He also mentioned Sarawak was requesting funds from the federal government to build at least 13 bridges to complete the coastal road from here to Miri.

“If we could get more money from Kuala Lumpur, we would build 10 to 15 bridges in the next few years. We are fighting very hard because it is a necessity.

“Without that we are spending RM65 million per year on ferry services,” he said.

Meanwhile, the dinner saw ACEM president Wong See Foong and ACEM Sarawak chairman Alphonsus Dorhat Rahani speaking about challenges facing engineers following liberalisation brought by the amendment to the Engineers Act.

The possible impact of the amended act is an influx of foreign engineers who will compete with the local engineers.

Manyin said Sarawak itself offered a lot of potentials for engineers with more basic infrastructure to be built, and he advised the local engineers to improve productivity and innovate more in order to stay competitive.

Sarawak Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) president Datuk Abang Abdul Karim Tun Openg, Local Government and Community Development Ministry permanent secretary Datu Dr Pengguang Manggil and JKR Sarawak director Zuraimi Sabki were among those present at the dinner.