

PRESS STATEMENT

DIVERSION OF PAN BORNEO HIGHWAY TO BYPASS BRUNEI

I welcome the Prime Minister's statement on the possible diversion of the Miri-Lawas-Sindumin road, which reaffirms our view that a diversion is necessary for a number of reasons.

The diversion of the highway will open up the interior of Sarawak for agricultural activities and business opportunities for the people living in the vicinity. There are several longhouses around the area, and the residents will benefit from the connectivity that this diversion will provide.

Tourism will also get a boost, as travelling to the various attractions in the area will become easier. Places such as Mulu, Mt Murud and Batu Lawi have huge potential for tourism, especially the latter 2 destinations which have not been promoted as tourist destinations.

It will be a lifeline for Limbang as at the moment there is a highway from Miri to Temburong bypassing Limbang. This proposed diversion will go through Limbang, bringing a much needed boost to the economic activities there.

On a more practical note, the bypassing of Brunei will make it easier for patients from the rural regions of Baram, Bario and Ba' Kelalan to get medical treatment in Miri Hospital. Currently, patients who need critical care have to cross Brunei to reach Miri hospital. This is a problem for many as not everyone holds a passport. The alternative is to be flown by helicopter – this is out of reach for most folks. Patients from Lawas needing critical treatment currently have to go to the hospital in Kota Kinabalu, and this is an added stress on the hospital in Sabah. The much-needed diversion therefore is potentially a life-saver for the people of northern Sarawak.

The Works Ministry has started to look at the best alignment for this diversion and I will personally monitor the progress.

**YB TUAN BARU BIAN
MINISTER OF WORKS**

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