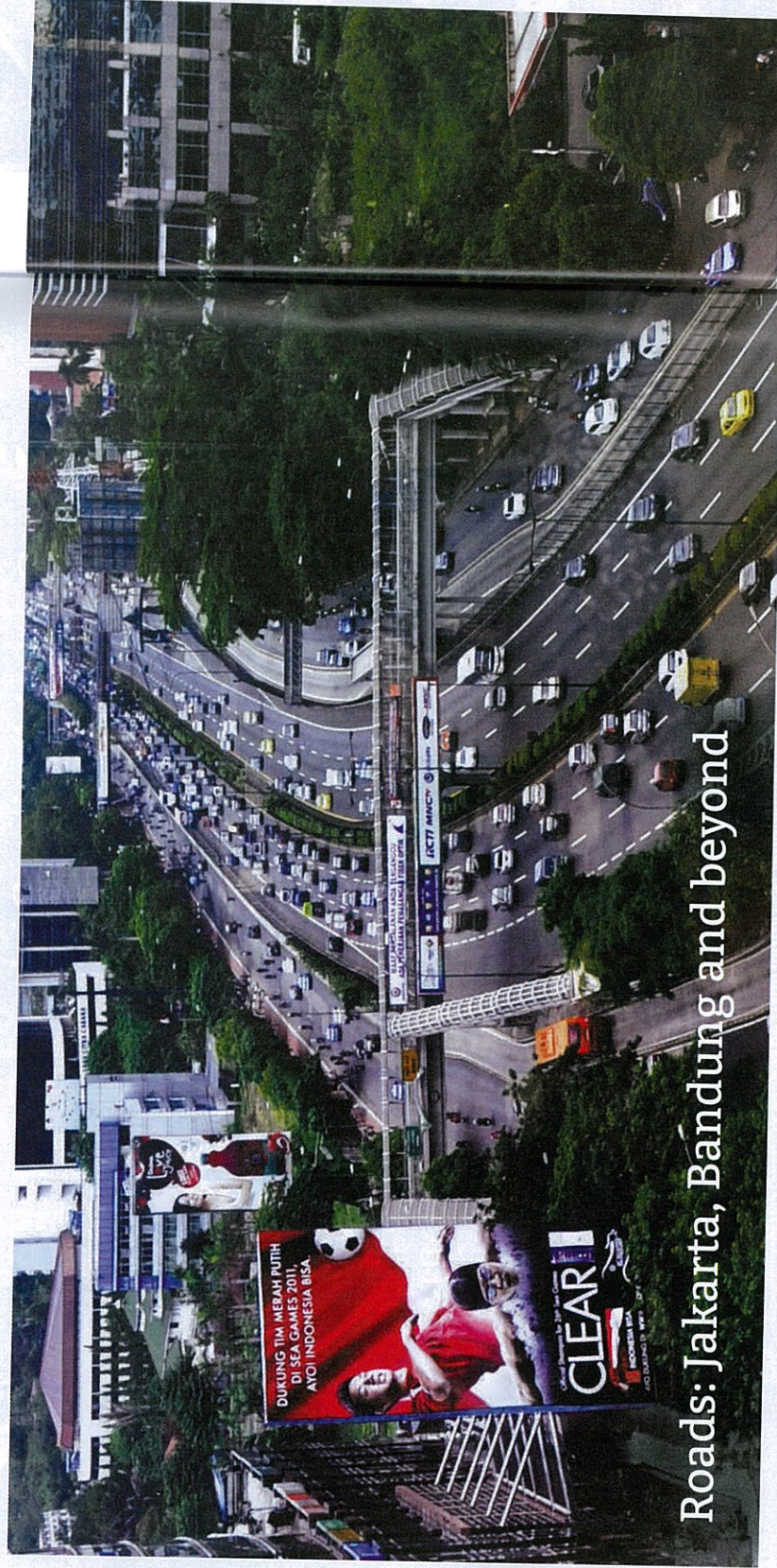




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Roads: Jakarta, Bandung and beyond

Recently I had the opportunity when looking at a mini-hydro development to travel on the toll road network that connects Jakarta and Bandung as well as the roads beyond. I still feel the pain of the awful experience of traveling the 28 km between Ciawi and Cibadak – it took three hours – and cannot wait to see the long-overdue toll link between Ciawi and Sukabumi constructed.

Traveling to Jakarta from Bandung is certainly busier than it was even two years ago, and entering the last 28 km from Cawang at Cibitung clearly demonstrates the lack of capacity on entering the Greater Jakarta boundary.

More work needed

The opening of the long-stalled JORR 2 section has had a dramatic effect on the traffic flows along the whole of the JORR link which now, as anticipated, carries a very large portion of the

truck traffic which previously went through the city center between Cawang and Grogol.

However, it is clear that apart from the severe lack of road capacity within the cities of Jakarta and Bandung there is also a shortage of toll roads serving these conurbations. There needs to be an acceleration of construction of the toll roads that have been on the drawing board for several years, often stymied by land acquisition issues as well as lack of concessionaire capacity, and the development of the ensuing generation of toll road links that are needed now as well as those going to be needed to serve, in the case of Greater Jakarta, the large population expansion expected over the next three decades.

Excluding the needed expenditure for the sea wall, Greater Jakarta should be looking at an investment of at least \$50 billion for road and rail, including monorail, transport development

Jakarta toll road's atmosphere

PHOTO MOH. DEFRIZAL

over the next 30 years. It should also be addressing this need as a Jabodetabek composite and not just within the main city jurisdiction.

For Bandung, the often-talked-about northern east-west link also needs to be addressed to relieve some of the congestion daily encountered once the traffic jam at the Pasteur toll gate has been negotiated. This link has been talked about for nearly 30 years.

There is anticipation that the first quarter of 2015, now approaching, will see the passing of the Land Reform Bill, which is expected to put a time limit on delay before acquisition needed for infrastructure projects, something not included in the Land Acquisition Bill of 2012.

There is hope that the Trans Java toll link will be completed by 2018. It is encouraging to note that the important extension eastwards from Cikampek to Palimanan, taking a traveler close to Cirebon, is now more than three quarters done. Efforts are being made also towards construction of other missing sections. There is also discussion on improving the very busy Pantura corridor in Central and East Java with a toll alternative.

In West Java the high level of usage of the Cawang-Cikampek toll road, a testament to the growth of the Indonesian economy over the past 20 years, requires the planning of a parallel toll route to the north, which can not only serve the critical needs of access to the Tanjung Priok expansion, but also the anticipated further expansion of the Bekasi-Karawang industrial corridor, to which a new port at Cilamaya will be added.

All of this is in line with the government's plans to stimulate much-needed inward investment and the manufacturing sector in particular, fundamental to improving the flagging employment situation.

The location of the first four toll road links in Sumatra prioritized as one of the last acts of the previous government, the first steps of the proposed Trans Sumatra highway, can each act as stimuli of the urban growth centers of Medan (North Sumatra), Pekanbaru-Dumai (Riau), Palembang (South Sumatra) and Lampung province.

And beyond. There is still a significant shortfall in the number of local government

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roads required to support regional development. There is, correctly, the new government's push towards investment in all aspects of the maritime sector, in which strategic ports development will play a key part.

Question of quality

However, in order to support the success of the implementation of this development, it will be equally important to attend to the hinterland road connections, of whatever category – national, provincial or district/city. To date most regional areas have not been performing to potential, one reason being the lack of road infrastructure, not only lack of road length but also too often in quality.

Both issues need continuing attention. The availability and quality of road infrastructure has a considerable part to play in reducing the unreasonably high logistic costs that commerce and industry currently has to deal with.

In the United Kingdom shortly there is to be an interesting conference discussing what has been taking place there in the road and rail corridors over the past decade. Over this period there has been a highly significant upsurge in passenger rail travel, suggesting that the availability of good, well-run, on-time rail transport will attract public usage, and this should be seen as encouragement to doubters of investment in the rail sector.

On the other hand, investment in the road sector has declined by an estimated 11% to the point that the secondary road network is showing grave signs of deterioration, a reminder that delay in attending to the Indonesian regional road network is not an option, if the regions of the archipelago are to ensure the success of the prioritized maritime development.