

A. M. Costa Rica

First section of asphalt going down on the Costanera Sur

By the A.M. Costa Rica staff

Asphalt work has started on a section of the Costanera Sur., the vital Pacific coast highway that has been promised for three decades.

President Óscar Arias Sánchez was in the area over the weekend and gave the symbolic go ahead to the final stage of the highway.

He also inaugurated a new bridge over the Río Naranjo between Savegre and Quepos. This is the fourth new bridge installed on this route.

A finished Costanera Sur is expected to give a boost to tourism, development and transportation. The bulk of the heavy traffic now takes the Interamericana highway that winds through San José and Cartago and then over Cerro de la Muerte. The Costanera allows motor transport straight down the coastal highway.

The highway has been gravel for years and a source of local air pollution as well as periodic washouts.

The highway jobs are valued at \$33.6 million. Three contractors are at work on different sections of the 42-kilometer (26-miles) road. It runs from Dominical to just south of Quepos.

Officials hope the work is finished in October, weather



Casa Presidencial photo
Óscar Arias gets to drive a steamroller on Costanera Sur

permitting. The area is notorious for heavy flooding, and more than one local bridge is destroyed each year.

The Río Naranjo bridge is costing \$2.8 million, and it is 198 meters (about 650 feet). The concrete beams are 56 meters (184 feet), the longest of any bridge in Central America. The other three bridges span the rios Paquita, Portalón and Matapalo. Three more bridges are in construction.