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Jubilant crowds came out to cross South Sudan's first permanent bridge over the River Nile after it was officially opened on Thursday.

The 560-metre long Freedom Bridge on the edge of the capital, Juba, was constructed using a grant from the government of Japan.

Construction began in 2013 but had to be suspended multiple times because of the civil war and the coronavirus pandemic.

The previous bridge could be dismantled and moved and was sometimes dangerous to cross – especially for pedestrians.

Thursday's opening was attended by the Kenyan presidential candidate and AU infrastructure envoy Raila Odinga, as well as the head of Japan's International Cooperation Agency Tanaka Akihiko.

President Salva Kiir told those assembled that the Freedom Bridge was a symbol of long and lasting friendship between the people of Japan and South Sudan.

It is hoped that the bridge will ease traffic congestion in Juba as well as help speed up trade.

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