LULING (AP) — Engineers are awaiting one last shipment to complete the “do-it-yourself” kit being used to build a bridge over the Mississippi River between Luling and Destrehan.

“That’s right,” said Dennis Burke, assistant project engineer. “It’s a kit that’s being shipped here piece by piece from Japan.

“All the bridge parts are at Luling now except for the final shipment,” said Burke. “And we’re expecting that one to be in real soon. It’s due Aug. 16.”

The bridge parts arrive at Luling by barge after being shipped to New Orleans from the Kure Shingu Works of the Ishikawajima-Harima Corp.

THE BRIDGE WILL span the river near a point where 78 people died when the Norwegian ship Frosta and a commuter ferry collided on Oct. 20, 1976.

It may be ready for use by Christmas 1981. Concrete foundations for the new bridge were made in the United States. The steel superstructure is coming from Japan piece by piece.

“It is stronger than other steel,” Burke said. There are reasons for using this weathering steel.

“It’ll never need painting,” Burke said. “And that saves on maintenance. And if the steel is scratched or damaged, it will heal itself.”

This is the longest cable-stayed bridge in the United States. The units are bolted together, three sections at a time, as per instructions from the manufacturer.

“EVERYTHING SEEMS to fit pretty well,” Burke said.

“The problems have come with a tough scale that forms on the steel and has to be washed off.”

Salt water may have caused it.

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