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Ghani: We'll let Cabinet decide on location of bridge

JOHOR BARU, Tues. - The Johor Government will not interfere with the Federal Government's decision to locate the proposed Malaysia-Indonesia bridge in Malacca, although Kukup in Johor is one of the closest points between Sumatra and the peninsula.

Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the State Government would leave it to the Cabinet to decide where the bridge should be located as it was a national project.

He said Johor would also not make any recommendations on the location of the bridge as Renong Berhad was already conducting a feasibility study on it.

"Some people have suggested that Kukup in Pontian is the closest to Sumatra in Indonesia. But then again, others have also said that Port Dickson in Negri Sembilan and Merlimau in Malacca are the nearest points to Sumatra.

"We leave it to the Federal Government to decide where it should be sited," he told reporters at the opening of the two-day international conference on the IMS-GT entitled Borderless Area for Sustainable Progress.

The conference is jointly organised by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute and the Institute Sultan Iskandar.

Last week, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who held talks with Indonesian President Suharto in Istanbul, Turkey, said Malaysia and Indonesia were planning to build a bridge across the Malacca Straits to link Peninsular Malaysia with Sumatra.

He said the bridge would depend on the results of a feasibility study being undertaken by Renong, and that it would be built if the findings were positive.

Dr Mahathir said that the bridge would not just to provide a link for vehicles but also for a rail service and for channelling electricity and gas.

The Malacca Straits, which separates Peninsular Malaysia from Sumatra, is one of Southeast Asia's vital trading routes. The narrowest points between the two is only 24km apart.

At present, ferry services link the two regions through Kukup in Johor, Malacca and Penang.

Following the announcement about the bridge proposal, the Malacca Government said it would lobby for the bridge to be built in the State.

Ghani also welcomed the Federal Government's move to provide low-cost housing through the establishment of Syarikat Perumahan Negara.

He said the State would look into ways to incorporate the services provided by SPN to benefit the people.

He said the plan would complement the State's efforts to meet the low-cost and medium-cost housing needs in Johor.

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