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Jelutong expressway: Consortium submits EIA

PENANG, Sun. - The consortium undertaking the RM400 million Jelutong Expressway construction last week submitted to the Department of Environment the project's terms of reference for a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment.

The department's acting director Raja Rokiah Raja Saigon, who had in the past expressed displeasure over delay in the matter, today confirmed that she had received a copy of the document.

"Our headquarters, which is handling the detailed EIA, will circulate the terms of reference to Government agencies for their perusal and for them to add other items if necessary.

"The terms of reference will normally be advertised so that the public too can give their views," she told the New Straits Times today.

The signing (of concessionary) agreement between the consortium, headed by IJM Corporation Bhd, and the State Government will be witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Tuesday.

Although the State Government had issued the letter of intent to the consortium about two years ago, there had been no progress on the project's EIA despite constant reminders from the department.

Raja Rokiah had said the consortium need not wait for the signing of the agreement for the project before conducting the EIA as the project had already been awarded to them, and that a detailed EIA was required.

DOE would take about three months to make a decision from the date the EIA report is submitted. "While the report is being reviewed, a public viewing of it will also be held."

She added the headquarters had started to select experts as members of an independent ad-hoc committee to review the report.

Commenting on the State Government's instructions that the consortium must complete the project within three years from the date of concessionary agreement, she said: "We will review the report at the normal pace. It would have been better if the EIA part had been settled early."

Meanwhile, State Public Works Department director Chuah Chong Soon said a penalty would likely be imposed if the consortium failed to complete the project within the three-year deadline. However, he said the State Government would first study the reasons for the delay.

"If it is due to squatters, then it may not be fair to take action against them," he said.

It has been reported that 200 families and 18 places of worship will be affected by the project.

The 4.5km Jelutong Expressway, which is the third and final package of the Penang City Outer Ring Road, will connect Jalan Tunku Kudin near the Penang Bridge to Pengkalan Weld.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon had said the project which would help in traffic dispersal, should have been completed in 1985 when the Penang Bridge was opened to the public.

The consortium would build the six-lane dual carriageway with a special lane for motorcycles and land reserved for Light Rail Transport System.

In return, they have been given reclamation rights totalling 120 hectares near the Penang Bridge.

It has been reported that a large portion of the expressway would be built on reclaimed land. There would also be three interchanges.

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