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Ghani-Bridge

PROBLEMATIC IF BRIDGE IS AT MUAR, BATU PAHAT OR PONTIAN, SAYS GHANI

JOHOR BAHRU, June 24 (Bernama) -- Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said today that it would be problematic, especially in terms of land acquisition, if the Malaysia-Indonesia bridge were to be located at Muar, Batu Pahat or Pontian.

This is because the three districts had a high concentration of landowners who were mainly smallholders, he said.

"It would be difficult to build an expressway here because there are no large estates in those areas," said Abdul Ghani after launching a two-day international seminar on the IMS-GT (Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle) here.

The seminar is themed "Borderless area for sustainable progress" and jointly organised by the Asian Leadership and Strategy Institute (Asli), Sultan Iskandar Institute (ISI) in University Teknologi Malaysia and the Johor Corporation.

Referring to suggestions for the bridge to be built in west Johor, Merlimau in Melaka, or Port Dickson, Abdul Ghani said; "We have no specific suggestions. We leave it to the federal government to decide on an appropriate location."

Last Thursday, Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Abu Zahar Isnin announced that he had directed four state departments to run feasibility studies to identify a suitable location for building the bridge in Melaka.

This followed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's announcement in Istanbul on June 15 that Indonesia had agreed to a proposed bridge linking Peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra across the Straits of Melaka, a major trade route in Southeast Asia.

West Johor is nearest to Sumatra -- only 24 kilometres' distance at its nearest.

There are currently a few ferry services providing transportation across the straits from Johor, Melaka and Pulau Pinang. -- BERNAMA

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