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Submit route for East Coast highway, consortium told

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KUANTAN, Wed. - The consortium selected to construct the RM3.5 billion East Coast Highway was today asked to submit the finalised route of the project to the State Government so that immediate steps could be taken to acquire the affected land.

Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Hasan Arifin said today a delay in the land acquisition exercise could further delay the implementation of the project, which is viewed as a catalyst for the State's economic growth.

"State Secretary Datuk Abdul Ghani Sulaiman has written to Works Ministry Secretary-General about the matter but until today the State Land and Mines office has not received any response from the Malaysian Mining Corporation-led consortium," he said.

Also in the consortium are United Engineers (M) Bhd and MTD Capital Berhad.

Hasan was speaking to reporters after the State executive council meeting which was chaired by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob.

The Land and Mines director, he added, had only received a request from the consortium to undertake survey works on the affected land but not for acquisition purposes.

Hasan, who is also State Industries and Basic Amenities Committee chairman, said the State Government was prepared to give full co-operation to the consortium like the issuing of Certificate of Urgency to speed up the land acquisition exercise.

Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said last month that the construction of the 336km highway, which was supposed to start in the middle of this year, would be carried out after negotiations between the Economic Planning Unit and the consortium were concluded.

It will be developed in two phases, linking Karak and Kuantan in the first phase and Kuantan and Terengganu in the second phase.

In another development, Hasan said Petronas was still conducting a study on the proposed dedicated railway line between here and Kertih, Terengganu.

In announcing the project after opening the W.R. Grace Packaging and Silica plants in Gebeng on March 17, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Petronas and KTM Bhd would discuss the implementation of the project.

Dr Mahathir said the dedicated railway line project was deemed necessary because the Government intends to build a new railway track linking the west and east coast.

Hasan added that work to expand Kuantan Port would also proceed.

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