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Assembly-Singapore (Johor)

NO DIRECT TALKS YET WITH S'PORE ON SECOND BRIDGE

JOHOR BAHRU, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said today that direct discussions with the Singapore government on the proposed second bridge to replace the Johor Causeway have not begun yet.

Discussions with Singapore would only be held after all needs and a detailed study on technical matters between the government and the developer were completely implemented, he told the Johor State Assembly.

As such, the proposed construction of the bridge was still at the level of discussions with the relevant authorities, he said when replying to a question from Mohamad Kasbi (BN-Tanjung Puteri).

Abdul Ghani said the matters under discussion included the distribution of development according to phases, approval of land reclamation activities for the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) Complex and the element of land replacement involving government land.

He said various opinions had been considered with regard to the concept of development, including from the Defence Ministry on matters relating to security.

Apart from this, advice was also obtained from the Works Ministry on the layout and design of the CIQ Complex, railway tracks, roads and multi-tier interchange, and the reaction of the community on the toll issue.

He said the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department had outlined several matters, and the projects proposed should be able to operate independently and should not be dependent on government contributions.

The toll rate to be imposed should be at the minimum level and should not burden the people, he said.

According to media reports, the federal government has given approval to a consortium called Gerbang Perdana Sdn Bhd to undertake the construction of the second bridge.

The consortium comprises Transwater Corp Bhd-owned Detik Nagasari Sdn Bhd and Diversified Resources Bhd with a 20 percent stake each, and the IBEX Corp Amalgamated Sdn Bhd-owned Merong Mahawangsa Sdn Bhd which has 60 percent interests.

The proposal to replace the Johor Causeway with a bridge was announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he visited Johor in July 1996.

The proposed 1.5km bridge will allow ships and boats to move freely in the Johor Straits as construction of the 1.2km Causeway in 1923 has cut off traffic between its east and west.

-- BERNAMA

MKO YBY