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Ghani-Bridge

GHANI HAILS JB-S'PORE BRIDGE

JOHOR BAHRU, Sept 5 (Bernama) -- Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman today welcomed the plan to build a new bridge between Malaysia and Singapore to replace the Johor Causeway here, saying the project is expected to yield economic spin-offs to the state.

With the construction of the bridge, several new interchanges had to be built around the city to disperse traffic, thus helping to overcome traffic jams in this city, he said.

"Land reclamation for the bridge project will start by year-end and expected to be completed in nine months before the bridge construction can start," he told a media conference after chairing the weekly state executive council meeting.

The agreement to build the bridge was reached during bilateral discussions jointly chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and visiting Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew in Putrajaya yesterday.

The Johor Causeway will be demolished after completion of the bridge in 2006.

He said land reclamation work would be carried out simultaneously with the land reclamation for the construction of a new customs, immigration and quarantine complex on a 34.8ha site and for the Tanjung Puteri project adjacent to the causeway.

He said the new bridge whose design had been completed by the Public Works Department (PWD) would be built parallel to the Johor Causeway and expected to be completed in 2006.

Ghani said the tolled bridge would be built simultaneously, about a kilometre by Malaysia and slightly more than a kilometre by Singapura, and would be connected in the middle of the Tebrau Straits.

"Once the new bridge is completed, the Johor Causeway built 1924 will be demolished in 2007," he said.

Refusing to divulge cost of the new bridge, he said it would be built by the private sector under the build, lease and transfer concept the respective portions between Malaysia and Singapore.

"Besides smoothening traffic flow between the two sides, the presence of the new bridge and the demolition of the Johor Causeway later, will enable water in the Tebrau Straits, currently blocked by the causeway, to flow along the straits," he said.

The railway track that runs beside the Johor Causeway would instead pass through a tunnel from Kebun Teh here to Kranji in Singapore, he said.

On the interchanges to be built around the city, Ghani said they had to be built to disperse traffic to western, eastern and northern parts of Johor from the Malaysian side of the bridge.

"This is to prevent the traffic from having to pass through the city congested with vehicles," he said, adding that north, west and east-bound traffic need not have to pass through congested roads like Jalan Wong Ah Fook in the heart of city.

One interchange, which Ghani felt should be built, was between the new bridge to Pandan, which would connect to the North-South Expressway.

On the agreement to supply water to Singapore by Malaysia, Ghani refused to comment it as according to him the federal government had not made any statement about it like the volume of water to be supplied and the water tariff to be charged on Singapore.

-- BERNAMA
MNY TS