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Views on Penang second link welcomed

PENANG residents and public interest groups wishing to express their views on the proposed second fixed link may continue to channel them to the State Government.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said while the final decision on the matter would be made by the Cabinet, there was still time for public views to be submitted.

"I am confident the Federal Government will be receptive to the views of the State Government and people of Penang," he told a Press conference after the launch of the National Seminar on Changing Direction Towards Sustainable Transport in Malaysia.

Koh said although Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu would be presenting the issue to the Cabinet, Penang's views were also being communicated to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and other ministers.

In expressing his disappointment that the Federal authorities did not consult the State when deciding on the site for the second link between Penang and the mainland, Koh said:

"This is an important matter that should be given priority so that the State Government could have a chance to make suggestions and participate in the drafting of policies and strategies."

He also expressed hope that future drafting of transportation policies and strategies for the reduction of traffic congestion by the Federal authorities would see consultation not only with project consultants, but also with State Government, local authorities and non-governmental organisations.

Samy Vellu had on July 31 announced that the second link would be a bridge and a submarine tunnel linking Bagan Jermal on the island and Bagan Ajam in Butterworth.

He had said that the northern link-up was selected over a proposed 8km central link-up between the Buterworth-Kulim and Jelutong Expressway, and the 20km southern link-up between Hujung Bukit and Batu Maung.

Samy Vellu had since clarified that a final decision had not been made by the Cabinet.

Koh however said, the State Government had decided to recommend the southern link which would not cost any more than the northern link despite being longer, as the more suitable choice.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Penang and North branch) today said the second link should not be built until the planning of the Penang and Butterworth outer ring roads and Jelutong Expressway were finalised.

"In doing so, we must also not forget the importance of the Penang Port, as we are still dependent on the port for our exports and imports," said chairman Datuk Nazir Ariff Mushir Ariff at the chamber's annual dinner.

He said there was a need for a thorough study to be carried out before any decision was made.

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