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`Share findings on environs impact'

Shahrur Sayuthi

GELANG PATAH, Sat. - Singapore should share with Malaysia the findings of its studies on the environmental and geographic impact of its reclamation project currently carried out near the countries' common border.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the sharing of the information will be a good step to prevent any suspicion arising from the project and help relevant parties such as port authorities to estimate possible impact on their operations.

He said any information provided by Singapore would be supplemented by studies such as the ones to be carried out by the Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP) and Johor Port in Pasir Gudang.

He said the port authorities would appoint their own consultants consisting of hydrographic specialists to study the impact of the reclamation project.

"There is no doubt that it will narrow the straits (of Johor and Tebrau)."

Dr Ling said this after accompanying a group tour of the PTP facilities here by members of the Malaysian Institute of Purchasing and Material Management, Southern Regional Centre and SMI Malaysia Johor Selatan.

He said initial findings indicate that there were no immediate threat posed by the reclamation project on the operations of the ports but instructions had been issued for the situation to be continuously monitored.

"We are not going to take any chances. If the reclamation project poses any threat to the ports, we will immediately inform the Singapore authorities about it."

Dr Ling also said there was no need for any unnecessary alarm until the studies by the Malaysian side have been completed.

"We need to first of all come up with a complete study on the impact of the reclamation project such as the changing water currents and sedimentation level (affecting the Malaysian shoreline)."

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia would seek an assurance from Singapore that the republic's land reclamation activities would not affect the deep water line demarcating the boundaries between the two countries.

On his visit to PTP today, Dr Ling commended PTP for gaining the reputation as one of the most efficient ports in the world.

He said the PTP's efforts to host the visit by the small and medium scale entrepreneurs would assist the Government's campaign to promote the maximum utilisation of local ports.

PTP, being a new port, has managed to increase the volume of its container handling from 418,000 in 2000 to 2.05 million last year.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Ling said Malaysia was fast becoming one of the most modernised transport oriented countries with 60 to 70 per cent of its goods being transported via container facilities.

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