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Mahathir-Gateway

MALAYSIA NEED NOT SEEK SINGAPORE'S PERMISSION, SAYS PM

JOHOR BAHRU, Jan 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia need not seek the permission of the Singapore government to implement the integrated southern gateway project which among others will house the new customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ) complex.

He said that the project, to be developed by Gerbang Perdana Sdn Bhd in Tanjung Puteri, does not involve the Singapore government.

"It does not involve Singapore...it is ours. We are implementing it on the Malaysian side...no need to seek permission," he told reporters after a briefing on the project by Gerbang Perdana's deputy executive chairman Datuk Yahya Abdul Jalil at Bukit Cagar here.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether Malaysia would need the Singapore government's permission to implement the project said to involve the construction of a new bridge and railway track linking the two countries, at the Johor Causeway.

Dr Mahathir said he believed that bilateral relations between the Singapore and Malaysian governments would not be affected by the implementation of the project.

He said what was crucial in the implementation of the project was that none of the parties would suffer losses.

The prime minister said that the federal government had in principle approved the project and was satisfied with its development concept and structural plan.

"So far, it (master plan) looks good. The government has received the plan from Gerbang Perdana and we'll therefore consider it but we have not yet reached a decision," he said.

Dr Mahathir believed that following the implementation of the project, the problem of traffic congestion at the Johor Causeway long faced by the Johor Baharu City Hall would be overcome.

"Congestion at the gateway to JB (Johor Baharu) appears to have reached an unacceptable level and at least it will overcome the congestion," he said.

Asked when the project would take off and how the government would fund its implementation, Dr Mahathir said: "As soon as possible...we haven't completed anything. We'll look for allocations somewhere, maybe from the private or the government's...as long as we can do it."

In the 30-minute briefing, Yahya said that the project, covering 38.65 hectares, involved the construction of a CIQ complex, the deepening of the seabed of the waterway at the Tebrau Straits and the construction of a bridge and railway station.

The project will be implemented on a fast track basic concept and expected to be completed at the end of 2005.

It would also involve the construction of six multi-level interchanges and the upgrading of several roads in the city, Yahya said.

-- BERNAMA

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