

**Lim: We failed to convince NGOs on big projects**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**March 13, 2012**

The Penang government has admitted that it had failed to convince some NGOs of the importance of the proposed four infrastructure projects to mitigate traffic congestion and spur economic development in the state.

However, Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng (right) insists that a public consultation was held in two meetings with the NGOs, including the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP).

The CAP, on the other hand, insists that public consultation involves engaging the people at the earliest stage of the decision-making process and has lashed out at Lim for not doing so.

Its president SM Mohamed Idris (left) said public consultation means providing adequate information and giving due consideration to the representations and views made by individuals and civil society.

"I would like to humbly remind the veteran CAP president that the very process he outlined was followed in deciding whether or not to proceed with the infrastructure projects," said Lim in a statement.

The projects are the construction of a 6.5-km Gurney Drive-Bagan Ajam (near Butterworth) undersea tunnel, a 15-km road connecting Tanjung Bungah and Teluk Bahang, the 5-km Gurney Drive-Lebuhraya Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu bypass and the 5-km Lebuhraya Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu-Bandar Baru Air Itam bypass.

No public consultation for second bridge

Lim said the state government wants to bring development growth to Severang Perai Utara to dispel vicious lies that the Malays and Barisan Nasional supporters in the mainland are neglected or marginalised.

He noted that the environmental concerns of the projects will be dealt with during the second round of public consultation when the design and route is chosen by the year's end.

"Eventhough NGOs such as the CAP has strongly objected to these infrastructure projects, the state government will still engage them by inviting them to the public consultation after the design and the route is chosen.

"If the state government is not satisfied then, it can still reject and refuse to proceed with the infrastructure projects."

penang second link bridge 030408 01Meanwhile, Lim lamented that no public consultation was held by the previous BN government when building the second Penang bridge.

Yet, the state government under Pakatan Rakyat is being "criticised more severely" for being transparent and accountable than the previous administration, which had never sought public input or consultation over the bridge project.

Lim said CAP is not the only organisation that has opposed the sea tunnel, as Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin had rejected the idea last November.

"However, public feedback from Penangites, particularly at Gurney Drive and SPU, shows that an overwhelming majority of Malays, Indians and Chinese support and want these infrastructure projects to proceed," he added.

NGOs did not oppose

Lim said the Penang executive council had decided to undertake these projects by open competitive tender on Oct 19, 2011, after public consultations were conducted from Apr 29.

According to Lim, the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed on Apr 28 between Beijing Urban Construction Group and the Penang government had "no legal force".

Witnessed by both Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak and China's Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, the MoU was a positive indication of China's interest in undertaking these projects in Penang, he added.

Following the MoU signing, Lim said two consultative sessions were held directly with the NGOs on Oct 16 and Nov 19.

"In both sessions, CAP was represented by Rudhrapathy Vijayavale (Ravi). I do not remember Mr Ravi expressing strenuous opposition to the four infrastructure projects at the end of the session," said Lim.

But Rudhrapathy has denied that at no time did the NGO agree to all of Lim's arguments and clarification regarding the projects.

Presently, the state is conducting a pre-qualification exercise by open competitive tender for the projects to shortlist qualified companies, said Lim.

No money will be paid as the projects are to be financed by a land swap of reclaimed land by Tanjung Pinang Development Sdn Bhd, he added.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd  
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/191928>