

Second bridge: 7-member body set up
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The Penang government has set up a seven-member committee to resolve all outstanding issues pertaining to land acquisition, design and cost to expedite the second bridge project across the Penang Channel.

MCPX

The high-powered committee will be chaired by Deputy Chief Minister 1 Mohammad Fairus Khairuddin. Members of the committee includes Deputy Chief Minister II Professor Dr P Ramasamy, executive councillors Chow Kon Yeow, Abdul Malik Abdul Kassim, Lim Hock Seng and Phee Boon Poh.

lim guan eng and penangThe committee will probe into all outstanding issues and find solutions to resolve them.

In announcing this, Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng hinted that he was forced to set up its own high-powered committee on the project since the federal government had failed to communicate with the state government on all the issues affecting the construction of the second bridge.

"We are in the dark. The federal government has not communicated with us on the land acquisition matters. We hope they will be fair and professional in this issue," he said.

Bad traffic congestion

Lim said he had already instructed the state's Economic Planning Unit (Upem) to expedite and work closely with the federal government on the second bridge project.

The present Penang Bridge, opened in 1985, is being overloaded with more than 100,000 vehicles daily.

Traffic congestion on the Penang Bridge gets worse during peak hours, rainy days and when accidents occurred.

The present bridge congestion has been cited as among the major reason for Penang to lose out to neighbouring Perak and Kedah on foreign investments.

Thus the construction of second bridge was crucial for the state development and growth of industrial sector.

The cost to construct the second bridge has gone up from original estimation of RM3.6 billion to RM4.5 billion.

penang second link bridge 030408 01It is expected to escalate since the federal government had decided to do away with subsidy for the diesel.

Although the cost of constructing the bridge was under the purview of the federal government, Lim said the government's financial burden shall not be passed on to the

people, who had already been burdened with escalating prices of essential goods.

To benefit all

He said the federal government should utilise the country's national oil company, Petronas, oil revenue to reduce the prices of goods.

"Oil revenue belongs to all Malaysians.

"It should be used for the benefits of all. The federal government should increase the subsidies not decrease them," said Lim, who is also Bagan MP.

He hinted that Pakatan Rakyat parliamentary opposition coalition would bring up the subsidy issue in coming session, scheduled to begin on Monday.

Sensing the importance of the second bridge for Penang's growth, when he assumed the chief ministership, Lim has pressed on the federal government to channel the oil money to pay for the second bridge instead of the state government having to raise funds for the project.

He urged the federal government not to borrow international funds to build the proposed second bridge across the Penang channel to link the island with the mainland.

It only needs to channel a little cut from the country's annual oil revenue of RM85 billion to build it for the benefit of the estimated 1.3 million people living in this northern island state.

However, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmd Badawi flatly turned down Lim's proposal when the duo met face-to-face in Putrajaya last month for the first time after the March 8 polls.

Lim has expressed fear that the escalating cost to build the second bridge would be passed on the toll charges on vehicle users.

"It would be unfair to pass the burden to the consumers. It would be a wrong principle," he said.