

RM14 mln for bridge study

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KOTA KINABALU: The federal government has approved a RM14.31 million budget to conduct a techno-economic feasibility study on the Labuan-Menumbok Bridge.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Dahlan said a consultant would be appointed within this month.

He said this when refuting claims that the feasible study announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak was just that, a study which would see no fruition.

Speaking to reporters after opening the International Conference On Social Transformation, Community And Sustainable Development 2017 here yesterday, Abdul Rahman said the construction of the bridge was on both the state and federal governments' priority list.

"There are a few quarters who are still questioning the government's intention to build a bridge connecting mainland Sabah and Labuan. They also claim that the study will be just that, a study, but let me stress here that it is not just merely a normal study.

"To build this long bridge needs a technical study so the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) has allocated more than RM14 million for the consultancy fees. A consultant will be appointed within this month and I will be visiting Labuan to make the announcement with representatives from the Federal Territory," he said.

The minister in charge of EPU disclosed that the study will look at where the bridge will be located, both in Labuan and mainland Sabah and also about how the construction will be financed whether through the development budget or Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

The study will involve comprehensive data collection and engineering studies to develop the technical concept for the project. The scope will include evaluation of the risks involved, action required for mitigation measures.

The techno-economic feasibility study will include preliminary engineering design, economic and financial analysis, road safety audit and third party field works such as soil investigation, survey, coastal studies, traffic studies and environmental studies.

The main objective of the techno-economic feasibility study is to prepare an updated estimated project cost using preliminary engineering design plans and to evaluate potential procurement models utilising the PFI scheme.

These findings will be used to establish benchmark for the next stage of project implementation, namely to prepare a Request for Proposal and call for an open tender to identify suitable investors from the private sector.



Rahman

"The study gives us strong basis to build the bridge as soon as possible. We cannot start the project without this study.

"This is not a study aimed at raising the hopes of Sabahans and Labuanites and as long as I am the EPU minister, this will be my priority," he said.

According to him the study will look into the most suitable alignment for the bridge. He added, "... there is small island between Labuan and mainland Sabah, Pulau Daat, so the study will look at whether the bridge will go through the island or go directly across to Menumbok. The state government has also looked into the development for Menumbok," he said.

"The bridge will also be connected to Pan Borneo. It's a seamless very comfortable journey for those travelling.

"So I urge the rakyat not to fall for talks that this is just another 'ordinary' study," he said, adding that the Labuan-Menumbok Bridge had been identified by the government as a key enabler to spur the future economic development of Labuan and its surrounding regions.

Abdul Rahman also said being strategically placed, this would leverage on Labuan's current position as a global and regional centre for international business and finance and is in line with the government's aspiration to develop Labuan into a smart and sustainable island city with a well-diversified economy by 2030.

"In 2010, a feasibility study was carried out by Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) which highlighted the need for the Labuan-Menumbok Bridge link.

"However, the feasibility study did not address the financial and economic appraisal of the project. The feasibility study was also very preliminary and insufficient to render itself for the development of possible PFI procurement models. Therefore the techno-economic feasibility study is needed in order to address these matters for the next stage of project implementation," he said.