

## **Gemas - JB rail project to proceed, says Transport Minister**

---

**PASIR GUDANG:** The double-tracking rail project between Gemas and Johor Baru will proceed as planned, although the authorities are aware of the residents' complaints over the matter, says Transport Minister Anthony Loke. He said the ministry was aware of the issues raised over the rail project along the Labis stretch and efforts were being made to address them. "The major problem for the people of Labis is they are fearful that it will split the town into two, where the shortcut route is too far from the town area. "I have directed the ministry's development unit and the project contractor to find several options and once they identify it, I will hold another discussion with the contractor to solve the issue." He also confirmed receiving official complaint letters from Labis MP Pang Hok Liong and Bekok assemblyman Dr S. Ramakrishnan about the residents' concerns. Loke was speaking to reporters after a ceremony where Johor Port Berhad, which is a member of MMC Group, achieved another milestone by handling a record container volume of one million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) here yesterday. He said the ministry welcomed feedback and views from the residents in Labis. "However, the double-tracking project will still continue. We will not put it on hold as it is very important for the country. "We will review the track's 200km alignment, which is very long," he said, adding that the project was slated to be completed by 2021.

The Sunday Star had reported about the complaints by those upset about the rail project. The residents said the town would be cut off from the surrounding areas as the existing 500m flyover for vehicles would be raised another 5m to accommodate the rail expansion works. As a result, motorists using the Labis-Yong Peng road will have to go almost 2km to make a U-turn back to Labis town. Ramakrishnan, who is state unity, domestic trade and consumer affairs committee chairman, said the Public Works Department (PWD) had yet to approve the traffic impact assessment and road safety audit reports. He said he was told that the department had sent several reminders to the contractor. Ramakrishnan, whose Bekok state constituency is within the Labis parliamentary seat, believed that the PWD was concerned over a Tamil school and mosque being located along a sharp bend on the road next to a slope. He urged the ministry to look into the matter, saying that even the temporary traffic flow under the traffic management plan had not been approved.

The Gemas-Johor Baru double-tracking project, estimated to cost RM12.4bil, is expected to be completed in 2021. It will have a total of 14 stations in the state – Tenang, Chamek, Senai, Segamat, Genuang, Labis, Bekok, Paloh, Kluang, Mengkibol, Renggam, Layang-Layang, Kulai and Kempas Baru.