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JITRA, AUG 28 (BERNAMA) -- THE GOVERNMENT WILL LAUNCH A 3.2KM-WIDE COASTAL RECLAMATION PROJECT ALONG THE PENINSULAR WEST COAST FROM PERLIS TO JOHOR TO INCREASE NATIONAL LAND SURFACE AREA, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

THE PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCED THIS WHEN HE OPENED THE KUBANG PASU UHNO DIVISION DELEGATES' MEETING AT SEKOLAH MENENGAH JITRA HERE.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS NEGOTIATING WITH THE JAPAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY (JICA) WHETHER THE AGENCY COULD CONDUCT THE FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE PROJECT.

CABINET RECENTLY APPROVED THE PROJECT TO USE THE RECLAIMED LAND FOR INDUSTRIAL SITES, HE SAID.

THE PROJECT WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY AFTER JICA COMPLETED THE FEASIBILITY STUDY, HE SAID.

HE SAID THE PROJECT IS A LONG-TERM UNDERTAKING TO BE CARRIED IN STAGES WHICH COULD TAKE UP TO 30 YEARS TO COMPLETE.-- MORE
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE PLAN TO INCREASE LAND AREA WAS A PREPARATION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS IN ANTICIPATION OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION INCREASE FROM THE PRESENT 17.2 MILLION.

HE SAID NATIONAL ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH WAS PROJECTED AT ABOUT 3401000 PEOPLE OR ABOUT A MILLION EVERY THREE YEARS.

WHEN APPROACHED BY REPORTERS LATER, HE SAID PART OF THE RECLAMATION PROJECT MIGHT BE PRIVATISED.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ONLY EARMARKED PENINSULAR WEST COAST FOR THE PROJECT BECAUSE OF THE SHALLOW SEA.

ON WHERE THE PROJECT WOULD COMMENCE, HE SAID IT COULD START IN SELANGOR AS THE STATE WAS RUNNING OUT OF INDUSTRIAL LAND.-- MORE
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THE PERLIS STATE GOVERNMENT HAD EARLIER ANNOUNCED PLANS TO RECLAIM COASTAL AREAS FROM KUALA PERLIS TO KUALA SANGLANG COVERING 4,000 HECTARES.

IN KEDAH, PLANS TO RECLAIM COASTAL AREAS STRETCHING FROM THE KUAH BEACH IN LANGKAWI HAVE ALSO BEEN APPROVED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID BESIDES INDUSTRIAL SITES, LAND RECLAIMED UNDER THE PROJECT WOULD ALSO BE USED TO BUILD AIRPORTS, SCHOOLS AND OTHER STRUCTURES.-- BERNAMA
1421MST 28 08 89