

U GE 05-03 00204 EB393

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Mahathir-triangle (requested rptn)

From Syed Imran Alsagoff

BATAM (Indonesia), March 5th (Bernama) -- Malaysia is looking into the possibility of signing a pact with Singapore to jointly develop Johor as part of the Economic Growth Triangle concept, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here today. *(P) Dr. M. Overseas trips.*

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) was being looked into by the federal government before making any decision, the Prime Minister added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who made a one-day visit to Batam Island today, was commenting on Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's proposal that Singapore and Malaysia sign an MOU to jointly develop Johor.

Encik Goh said that if the two countries signed the agreement, then two sides of the triangle would be completed, as Singapore already had a similar agreement with Indonesia to jointly develop the Riau province.

He said the third side of the triangle would be completed if Malaysia could later work out an understanding with Indonesia.

Speaking to reporters before leaving for Kuala Lumpur, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia welcomed joint efforts to develop the Growth Triangle and Encik Goh's proposal would be carefully studied.

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♥05/03/21-26MST

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Mahathir-triangle 2 Batam (Indonesia) (requested rptn).

Touching on trilateral talks between the Growth Triangle partners, he said it should be held at the central government level so that basic things could be looked into.

For example, he said, Batam and Singapore were free ports while Johor was not and this had to be looked into at central government level before the local authorities, such as the Johor state government and the Riau provincial administration, could hold talks.

He also said that Malaysia could participate in the development of Batam under the Growth Triangle.

He did not name any specific area but said that Malaysian companies could invest in the Batam Industrial Park being jointly developed by Singapore and Indonesian authorities.

Earlier, on arrival at the Hang Nadim airport from Bali, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was met by Indonesia's State Minister for Research and Technology, Prof Dr B.J.Habibie, and Riau provincial officials.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by Finance Minister Datuk Paduka Daim Zainuddin, Culture and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, Johor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji-Abdul Hamid.

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Mahathir-triangle 3 Batam (Indonesia) (requested rptn)

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was taken to Batam Centre where he planted a +Beringin+ tree to symbolise +Friendship between the Malaysian and Indonesian people+.

In November 1987, President Suharto and the Singapore Prime Minister then Lee Kuan Yew also planted +Beringin+ trees at the centre. Three more plots were reserved for the other three Asean heads of government from Brunei Darussalam, Thailand and the Philippines.

The Prime Minister, who had a tight schedule, was given separate briefings by the Indonesian and Singapore government leaders at Wisma Batam and Batam Industrial Park, respectively.

Present at the briefings were Indonesian Junior Minister for Trade and Industry Tungku Ariwibowo and Singapore Minister of State for Trade and Industry Mah Bow Tan.

In KUALA LUMPUR, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was met on his return by Science, Technology and Environment Minister Law Hieng Ding and Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Ahmad Kamil Jaafar. -- Bernama

♥05/03/21-28MST