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Triangle

by Sukardi Abdul Ghany

JAKARTA, March 21. (Bernama) — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has given the green light for the proposed development of an economic cooperation triangle involving Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.

The proposed +Northern Triangle+, similar in concept to the economic growth triangle involving Johor Baharu, Singapore and Indonesia's Batam Island, will link Penang, Medan and Aceh in north Sumatra and Phuket in southern Thailand under coordinated economic programmes.

The Malaysian Ambassador here, Datuk Abdullah Zawawi Haji Mohamed, said the cooperation was likely to begin soon given the close understanding between leaders of the countries to further forge economic ties for mutual benefits.

The Indonesian leadership too was receptive to the idea while the Penang state government had begun initiatives with the federal government to develop such cooperation, he added.

Datuk Abdullah was speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony for the Malaysian Consulate General's office complex in Medan. The text of his speech was released here today.

Penang Chief Minister Dr Koh Tsu Koon, who was here last month, had met Indonesian officials to discuss the proposal, first brought up at an international seminar held in Penang in August last year. — more

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Triangle 2 Jakarta

Based on the Johor Baharu-Singapore-Batam triangle of growth, Datuk Zawawi said the authorities felt it was appropriate to initiate similar cooperation for the northern Malaysian state, Indonesia's northern provinces and the southern Thailand province.

In addition, Penang and Medan already enjoyed close ties under their twin cities programme over the years, he added.

He said the authorities envisaged public sector participation under this cooperation to facilitate and accelerate the economic growth, particularly in the triangle.

He said: +In general, Sumatra province needs no introduction to Malaysians. They make up the core of visitors to the province either as tourists, students or on businessmen.

+Malaysia Airlines had to increase its scheduled flights to Medan from one daily to nine times a week to meet increasing traffic demand while regular sea links were also on the increase.+

Datuk Zawawi also said that Malaysia's decision to build the \$3 million Consulate-General's office in Medan was prompted by economic and trade considerations in view of the importance of the province to Malaysia.

Because of Indonesia's importance in Malaysia's foreign relations perspective, various efforts were being made to boost bilateral ties for mutual benefits and regional stability, he added.

Officials said opportunities offered in the triangle would be mainly in the tourism and investment areas, generated by its strategic geographic location and easy access. — Bernama

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