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EAST COAST SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ITS COMPETITIVE EDGE, SAYS MAHATHIR
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Kuantan, Aug 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged east coast states to take advantage of their competitive edge to attract foreign investment and not wait for land communications with the west coast to be improved.

There was a need for improvement in east-west communication but the states of the east coast should not merely wait for this but rather take steps now to develop their industrial sector, he said.

One of the advantages of the east coast states was that they were facing the South China Sea and were more accessible to ships from Latin American nations with which Malaysia was stepping up trade, he said.

+The Straits of Melaka cannot accommodate big ships. Port Klang can only cater for ships up to 70,000 tonnes whereas Kuantan Port can accommodate vessels of up to 120,000 tonnes.+

With a little more deepening, Kuantan Port can take in ships of up to 200,000 tonnes and this meant here there was a deepwater port enabling big ships such as those bringing in iron ore to berth, he told reporters after attending a briefing on Pahang's development. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said countries such as Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia which were also near the South China Sea were developing their economies and needed trade with other countries.

If the east coast states concentrated on the nations on the South China Sea rim, they had equal potential as the states of the west coast but they would have to change their strategies, he added.

For instance there was a major supply base in the east coast which could play an effective role in oil exploration works now being actively undertaken in Vietnam, the Prime Minister said.

East coast states could also supply construction steel to the three countries of Indo-China, he said. -- more

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Investors themselves appeared no longer very keen to invest in the west coast states because of increasing costs and manpower constraints, he said.

The Prime Minister expressed satisfaction with the development taking place in Pahang.

He noted that many of the industrial sites prepared by the Pahang Government now had factories.

The Prime Minister also urged investors involved in the hotel and accommodation industry to speed up their projects as Pahang was facing a shortage of accommodation facilities.

Earlier Dr Mahathir was briefed on Pahang's development by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob. -- Bernama

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