

East coast to see rapid industrialisation

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KUANTAN, Thurs. — The east coast states are expected to undergo rapid industrialisation following the implementation of development programmes in neighbouring countries like Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The industrial sector in these states were also expected to see accelerated growth, benefiting from the shortage of workers in the west coast, the Prime Minister added.

Asked by reporters if the east coast states could become a centre for industries, he said it was only a matter of time before this became a reality.

The east coast has a competitive edge because of its commercial port and the deep-water port can be further developed.

The deep-water port (in Terengganu) could handle

much bigger ships than Port Klang.

It can handle ships of up to 100,000 tonnes and if the port is deepened, this can be extended to ships of up to 200,000 tonnes.

It will be faster for cargo ships from Latin America to go to the east coast ports than to Port Klang.

Dr Mahathir also expected faster growth of the steel and oil industries in the region with oil exploration activities taking place in Vietnam.

Speaking to reporters after attending a closed-door briefing at the State Economic Development Corporation office here this afternoon, Dr Mahathir said that investors would have to go to the east coast to set up factories because of the shortage of workers elsewhere.

Many factories have already relocated their fac-

tories to the east coast states which have ample labour supply.

He said the hotel industry could also prosper in Pahang which would have another 14 hotels in operation soon. The state has about 3,000 hotel rooms.

Asked about the proposed extension of the rail service from Port Klang to the east coast states, he said the project could not be carried out yet in view of the high cost involved. Besides, the Government has other more important priorities.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Khalil Yaakob, took a 2½-hour helicopter ride to have an aerial view of the various industrial areas and tourist spots in the state. The Prime Minister later attended a dinner at the Indera Mulia hall at Bandar Indera Mahkota about 5km from here.