

Mahathir: Wise to cancel Jerai plan

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the cancellation of the proposed Jerai International Park project in Kedah was a wise decision because many people, particularly the landowners, were against it.

It was government policy not to undertake any project against the wishes of the people, he told reporters after presenting excellence service awards to Home Ministry staff here.

Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff announced the cancellation of the RM17 billion project last week following the protests.

Dr Mahathir advised state governments which wanted to implement massive development projects to determine the capability of the companies which proposed the

projects.

He also said that the state governments must ascertain the impact of the project on the landowners, whether they benefited or otherwise.

"Even in Langkawi, we have acquired much land for tourism projects, but there has been no protest from the landowners," he said.

At the same time, he said, the Government also reclaimed land from the sea so that it did not have to acquire land from owners.

In ALOR STAR, state officials are keeping an optimistic front in the wake of the Jerai park debacle.

Several key officials admitted being dejected but were confident the state's "economic momentum" would not be seriously affected.

State Economic Planning Unit (Upen) and

Kedah State Development Corporation (KSDC) officials are plodding on with scheduled programmes, working on other development projects and investment strategies.

The Menteri Besar chaired a meeting of the state economic planning committee yesterday, with implementation of the new 10-year Kedah Development Action Plan on top of the agenda.

He approved the implementation schedule of the plan (1991-2000), which starts with full scale briefings for all government officers.

Also on the agenda was a proposal on the planned Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle project.

A senior state government official told *The Star* discussions on other notable development projects were not included to "cool things down" fol-

lowing the Jerai park controversy.

The KSDC was in full swing yesterday, with investors from Japan and top officials working out details of projects arising from the state's investment promotions mission to Tokyo and Nagoya recently.

The Japanese investors included a team from the Bank of Nagoya, which had signed a memorandum of understanding with the state government to act as the state's investment agent.

The official said a series of meetings had been planned over the next few weeks with Japanese and South Korean investors who would be finalising many deals.

Thirteen Japanese and South Korean firms have signed letters of intent to invest a total of US\$25 million (RM67.5 million) in Kedah.