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ANWAR CONFIDENT LABUAN WILL HAVE STRONG NICHE IN ISLAMIC INSTRUMENTS

LABUAN, Aug 29 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim expressed confidence that Labuan will not only develop as an offshore financial supermarket offering a wide range of offshore financial products, but will also have a strong niche in Islamic financial instruments.

With such credentials, he said that Labuan is destined to evolve into a premier International Offshore Financial Centre (IOFC) of the Asia Pacific region.

"On its part, the government has spared no efforts to develop Labuan as clearly evident from the resources devoted to providing suitable infrastructure facilities," he said in the foreword of a magazine on the Financial Park distributed at the official opening of the complex by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad here today.

The magazine gives a background on the facilities available at the RM360 million financial park complex.

Anwar said apart from the financial park complex, there has been an upgrading of power supply provision for a hospital, international school, a bigger airport terminal, earth telecommunications satellite, and fibre-optic submarine cable system in the island.

On the other hand, the Labuan Offshore Financial Services Authority (LOFSA) has undergone complementary development to serve as a one-stop agency offering comprehensive advice and supervision of the offshore industry, he said.

The completion of the complex represents a major landmark in the overall progress of the offshore financial centre in Labuan.

"It provides the appropriate infrastructure to accommodate the government's requirement for the relocation of management offices of offshore banks and insurance companies from Kuala Lumpur to Labuan, a move designed to concentrate and maximise the development of the island as a IOFC," he said.

Anwar added that the relocation has contributed to the considerable growth in economic activities on the island as reflected by the increase in commercial buildings, housing projects and new restaurants.

Expansion in the retail business is accompanied by the proliferation of firms providing professional services, he said.

Such developments are natural spinoffs from the creation of the IOFC and the principal beneficiaries would be the local population through the creation of new jobs and opportunities. -- BERNAMA