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MOU SIGNED FOR RM800 MILLION LAND RECLAMATION PROJECT IN MERSING

By: Wan A.Hulaimi

THE HAGUE, Dec 4 (Bernama) -- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed here Tuesday between a Malaysian company and a Dutch engineering company for a turnkey project to reclaim about 800 acres (364 hectares) of land in Mersing, Johor.

The signing ceremony, between Enerwise Sdn Bhd and major Dutch engineering company Grabrowsky & Poort BV, was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The project will have a development price tag of RM800 million with a project value of some RM1.2-1.4 billion.

Grabrowsky, designers of the Amsterdam Arena Stadium, where the MOU was signed, as well as the project manager for the Town Hall in the Hague, were also designers of a major flood barrier on the Zuyder Zee.

The project started in a conversation between two Malaysian entrepreneurs with the Mersing district officer some years back.

The then district officer of Mersing Datin Paduka Hajjah Hashim Endut told one of the present movers of the project that the area needed something to be done to stop silting of the area.

The idea then came to Haji Baharuddin bin Buang, an accountant, to look into the coastal problems of the area and beyond into the coastal problems of the country as a whole.

He got together with banker Haji Suar Nor Mohammad to set up Enerwise with the backing of an engineering firm in Kuala Lumpur.

The project was temporarily shelved with the change of Menteri Besar in Johor but, now, with the participation of Perisin Property Development Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of the Pusat Kemajuan Ekonomi Islam Negeri Johor (PKEINJ), it is now on the move again.

As a pre-condition for the project to be revived, Enerwise had to allow Perisin to increase its stake in the project from 25 percent to 51 percent, but with the company still run by the two original partners.

Haji Baharuddin said the project, already about two years behind, would now have to be targetted for the end of the monsoon season.

In the meantime, there was work for them to do to arrange a financing package for turnkey contracts.

Part of the money would come from offshore Arab bankers and the rest would be syndicated by a local bank, he said.

While the Mersing reclamation project is now in the offing with the signing of the MOU here, Haji Baharuddin has also set his eyes on the grander aim of laying the blueprint for the Malaysian Coastal Master Plan for which Enerwise, in another incarnation as Vision Construction Sdn Bhd, is now working closely with Malaysian National Hydraulic Institute (NAHRIM).

Although the Master Plan would have to gain the approval of the government, Vision Construction is already talking to Dutch Engineers - who are leaders in this field - as well as to the Dutch government.

Haji Baharuddin said the Dutch government had agreed in principle to finance part of the cost provided some conditions were fulfilled, such as the use of Dutch engineers and experts.

There was an urgent need for a coastal policy for Malaysia now because "we do not have one," Haji Baharuddin said.

He cited examples of erosion and silting in various spots in the peninsula which showed the need for projects in the coastal areas to be

properly planned and monitored.

The proposed Master Plan would also involve a coastal resource tagging which would enable Malaysia to have a database of the characteristics of its coastal areas and a record of such things as corals, sand deposits, mangrove areas and so on. -- BERNAMA

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