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Kelantan (News Focus)

NIK AZIZ OPTIMISTIC OVER PAS-UMNO ECONOMIC COOPERATION

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

KOTA BAHARU, May 22 (Bernama) -- When Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat attended a gathering of journalists two nights ago, he appeared to be in high spirits as he spoke about economic issues.

He was extremely optimistic over the economic cooperation between the PAS-led Kelantan government and the federal government.

The Kelantan State Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), through its subsidiary, Keloil Sdn Bhd, and the Koperasi Usaha Bersatu Malaysia (KUB), whose members are mostly Umno members, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on May 9 to develop a petrochemical industry in Kelantan.

The joint-venture project involves the setting up of an oil and gas and independent power producer (IPP) complex at Pantai Senok, about 10km from here, estimated at RM2 billion.

Nik Aziz said he was confident that the project would pave the way for more economic ventures between Kelantan and the federal government.

"From a small lane, we will build a road and later develop it into a highway," he said of development in Kuala Lumpur-Kota Baharu relations since PAS took over the administration of the state from the Barisan Nasional (BN) six years ago.

Nik Aziz said that if PAS needed the government of the BN coalition, of which Umno is the dominant party, to help develop the state, Umno could not just ignore PAS which led the state government.

"We need Umno and Umno needs us...that's the actual fact," he said.

At his meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Nik Aziz said he had requested that the federal government set up a port in the state and extend the runway at the Sultan Ismail Petra Airport in Pengkalan Chepa.

Besides making it possible for the airport to handle bigger aircraft to allow for direct flights to places like Jeddah and Manila, he said that the expansion of the airport was vital in view of the volume of traffic at the airport.

For Niz Aziz and most of the state leaders, the cooperation between PAS and Umno was more realistic than the move by Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46), now embroiled in problems with PAS, to forge cooperation with Umno following the announcement by Tengku Razaleigh recently that his party is cooperating with Umno.

Meanwhile, there are speculations that several S46 state assemblymen would join Umno.

In the 43 seat assembly, PAS has 24 seats, S46 12 seats while the BN has seven seats.

The PAS state leadership remains unperturbed while S46 leaders in the state dismissed such talk as mere speculation. -- BERNAMA

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