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Mahathir-Wall

NO UNFRIENDLINESS INTENDED IN ERECTION OF BORDER WALL, SAYS MAHATHIR

PADANG BESAR, April 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today no unfriendliness was intended by Malaysia towards its neighbour, Thailand, by the construction of the border wall between the two countries.

It was aimed at facilitating administrative matters along the border such as to check smuggling activities, he added.

"With the existence of the wall, all administrative matters can be attended to in a better and more orderly manner," he said when opening the Immigration and Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (LKIM) Integrated Complex here.

The RM6.9 million complex, opened at the end of 1993, houses offices of the Immigration Department, LKIM, Customs Department, Road Transport Department, Agriculture Department and the Police.

He said the wall was being built on Malaysian soil, not on the border and this reflected Malaysia's respect for its neighbour.

The move would not only benefit Malaysia but also Thailand in terms of border security, he added. It had also succeeded in reducing smuggling activities as reflected in the increased tax collection.

Dr Mahathir also expressed confidence that Padang Besar town could be developed if the people there were willing to grasp the business opportunities that were being generated.

Many business opportunities were being created through the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) which could spur the growth of the town, he said. The IMT-GT encompassed northern Sumatra, northern Peninsular Malaysia and southern Thailand.

He added: "If the people are smart enough to grab the opportunities that come by, there is no reason why Padang Besar cannot develop and be on par with other border towns."

He said the railway double-tracking project from Singapore to Bangkok would further spur development of the town both from the commercial and tourist aspects.

On the request by the Perlis Government to make Padang Besar a duty-free zone, Dr Mahathir said the matter would be considered by the Cabinet.

He felt it could be among the steps that could be taken to expedite Padang Besar's growth.

Dr Mahathir also stressed the importance of ensuring that administrative matters at Malaysia's entry points were carried out efficiently.

Apart from a clean and beautiful environment, efficient and courteous service would give a good first impression to foreigners of the nature of the country as a whole, he said.

He was also happy with the set-up at the Padang Besar complex which was among the tidiest border checkpoints in the country.

Dr Mahathir planted a golden teak tree at the complex site before inspecting the complex.

Earlier the Prime Minister presided at the ground breaking ceremony for the Sungai Chuchoh Industrial Park near here.

He also witnessed the signing of 21 Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) involving the Perlis Government, Perlis State Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) and 19 foreign and local companies.

They included one for the building of 19-seater planes, involving a joint venture between the SEDC and Aeromax International Inc of the United States.

Speaking at the function, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said up to this year seven big companies had invested in the state.

He said the Perlis Government always encouraged foreign investment and provided various incentives and facilities.

The Sungai Chuchoh Industrial Park covers 702 hectares and offers various facilities for small and medium scale industries. -- BERNAMA

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