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TABUNG HAJI AND JPDC DEVELOPING OIL PALM ESTATE IN MINDANAO

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 25 (Bernama) -- Lembaga Tabung Haji and Janoub Philippines Development Corporation, Inc (JPDC) are developing a 5,500-hectare of oil palm estate in Mindanao.

An agreement for the joint venture, which is Tabung Haji's first project in the republic's palm oil industry, was signed by the two parties at the Tabung Haji headquarters here today.

Tabung Haji chairman Datuk Ahmad Razali Mohd Ali, who signed for the agency, said the estate, located in Lanao Del Sur is part of about 300,000 ha which the joint venture company would develop complete with mills and refinery.

JPDC was represented by its chairman Datu Haji Abul Khayr D.Alonto.

"Tabung Haji has started work on the initial 5,500 ha estimated to cost RM64 million or 640 million pesos," Ahmad Razali told Bernama later.

Tabung Haji, which had set up an office in Mindanao to monitor the project, hoped the entire venture would provide at least 700 jobs to the islanders, he said.

"We believe that this joint venture will directly or indirectly contribute towards promoting economic well being of our Muslim brothers and sisters in the Philippines in general and in Mindanao particularly," Ahmad Razali said speaking at the ceremony.

In his speech Abul Khayr said the venture would be a gateway to future cooperation between Mindanao and other East Asian countries.

"We are not only hoping to make money out of the project but also perform social responsibilities to Mindanao Muslims," he said.

The joint venture agreement followed Malaysian prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's commitment to the Ramos Administration to help develop oil palm plantation in Mindanao. -- BERNAMA

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