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Reclamation project `will benefit Kedah'

ALOR STAR, Thurs. - The proposed sea reclamation project in Kedah will greatly benefit the State if implemented properly, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the reclaimed area could be used to build new ports, house various industries and businesses and for other purposes.

"Such reclamation projects are nothing new, similar projects are being carried out in Malacca.

"However, we must ensure that the reclamation works are carried out without harming the environment," he said, adding that the people should avoid misunderstandings and accusations regarding the project.

"Sometimes, certain people come out and start opposing whenever a new programme is planned.

"Later when we investigate, we find out these people have a vested interest and that is why they want to oppose," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is the Barisan Nasional chairman, said this in his speech at a meeting with BN component party leaders and members at the Menteri Besar's official residence.

Also present were Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, State MCA chairman Datuk Chua Jui Meng and State MIC chairman V. Saravanan.

The proposed reclamation project is Sanusi's idea and involves the reclamation of 12,800ha of sea along the Kedah coastline.

The RM30 billion project will be carried out in stages over a 35-year period.

The reclaimed area has been earmarked for various purposes ranging from industrial development, fisheries, agriculture, housing, recreational activities to golf courses and development of small towns.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir also called on the people of Kedah to strive to develop the State, which he described as still lagging behind other States.

Dr Mahathir said there were many opportunities in Kedah but the State was still trying to catch up with the others.

"We have to ask why Kedah is still behind although we have produced two of the country's four Prime Ministers.

"Other States like Selangor, Johor and Penang have gone far ahead of us ... you could say that they have advantages like being close to the capital city or Singapore but there are also lots of opportunities in Kedah," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Kedah had the advantage of being strategically placed in the Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Growth Triangle and having a flat terrain.

"Every time I come back I see all these opportunities. However, sometimes I still have to ask investors to come here or ask for certain industries to be placed here.

"And those who come and invest in the State have never been disappointed," he said, adding that Kedah could be developed faster if the people accepted new ways and ideas.

The Prime Minister, however, expressed confidence that the Kedah Government would think of ways to develop the State.

He suggested that the State Government take advantage of the flat terrain and look into the possibility of constructing railway tracks for high speed trains between Penang and Kedah.

"The flat terrain will be ideal to construct a straight track between the two points.

"We can then introduce high speed trains which can travel up to 170kph and this will cut travelling time between the two places to only half an hour and this will help attract investors," he said.

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