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PM's nod for building Johor's new capital

Ravi Nambiar

JOHOR BARU, Tues. - The Prime Minister has given the "thumbs up" for Johor Perdana - the Johor Government's proposed new State administrative capital in Kota Tinggi.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad gave the approval at a closed-door briefing on the project by Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman during his visit here last week.

Confirming this today, Ghani said that the Prime Minister had given the "go ahead" because only 10 per cent of the project would involve imports by way of construction materials.

He said he had also been informed that the Cabinet had also cleared Johor Perdana for implementation in line with the Government's decision to spend on large-scale infrastructure projects to trigger spin-offs in other sectors of the economy.

"The Prime Minister has given his blessings. The Cabinet has also approved the project.

"It is now left to Johor to work out the financing to develop Johor Perdana."

The Menteri Besar was speaking after appearing on TV3's morning talk show Malaysia Hari Ini today.

Ghani did not elaborate on the financing arrangements but much of this is expected to come by way of private sector investments as the project will be built on land owned by three major plantation groups along Sungai Johor in Kota Tinggi, 48km from here.

Dr Mahathir was shown the site during his previous visit to Johor in February last year, when he was taken on a helicopter tour of the area.

Ghani said Johor Perdana would be a purpose-built waterfront capital designed to house all existing major Government offices here. This includes the State Secretariat in Bukit Timbalan.

The move is in line with plans to decentralise the administrative functions of the State Government and ease over-crowding and traffic congestion in the city.

The development concept was drawn up by consultants in urban habitat at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia's Institute Sultan Iskandar, as part of a study called the "Johor River Basin Project".

Ghani said the Johor Perdana proposal was significant because it would spur development on Johor's east coast, which is one of the poorest and least developed areas in Johor.

The project is also expected to expedite the development of Desaru into a world-class holiday destination and Johor's number one tourism money spinner.

This is because travelling time between Johor Baru and Desaru would be cut by half with the construction of a RM300 million bridge across the Sungai Johor as part of the Johor Perdana development.

The six-lane (three on each side) 4.5km bridge is one of the main components of the Johor Perdana development.

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