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Johor, Singapore to develop high-tech industrial park

JOHOR BARU, Fri. - Johor and Singapore have agreed in principal to jointly develop a new industrial park for high-technology industries.

Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the project - the first collaboration by the two neighbours for a long time - would be built on a 810ha site in Kulai, 33km from here.

He said the park would cater to a new wave of capital intensive investments in Johor from, not only indigenious Singapore companies, but also multi-national corporations based there.

Ghani first mooted the idea with Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in February last year during his official visit to Singapore as Menteri Besar.

The matter was raised again when Goh feted Ghani to a Chinese New Year dinner at the Raffles Hotel on Feb 7, and yesterday, when Ghani invited Goh for a reciprocal Hari Raya reception at `Saujana', his official residence here.

Ghani said the joint project would be a manifestation of Johor and Singapore's commitment to the `prosper thy neighbour' principle, adding that such cooperation was vital during these `challenging times'.

"The current regional economic problems make it a more convincing argument for us to have this kind of strong collaboration for mutual prosperity," he told reporters after the dinner in honour of Goh last night.

The Prime Minister had led a 25-strong Singapore delegation for the event, which included four Cabinet ministers, two Senior Ministers of State and a Minister of State.

Also in the group were four Members of Parliament, head of the Civil Service and seven other top civil servants and five leading captains of industry in the republic.

For Goh, this was his second visit to Johor in less than a month. On Jan 20, he met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at Sebana Cove near Desaru.

He will also be in Kuala Lumpur later this week for another round of talks with Dr Mahathir, where Johor-Singapore issues are expected to feature prominently.

Relations between the two neighbours took a dive last year following Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's disparaging remarks about Johor.

But Ghani stressed last night that both sides were now eager to pick up from where they left and build on the long-standing neighbourly ties for mutual gain.

Although relations went through a bad patch last year, current economic conditions warranted closing ranks and collaboration on the economic front.

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