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MB: State's growth hinges on skilled human resources

PENANG, Mon. - The Terengganu Government's efforts to attract more investors to the State and promote economic growth is dependent on its human resource skills, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad said today.

He said rapid physical development in the State would have no effect if its workforce was not ready to meet industrial needs.

"Skills development training is one way to address this issue, while eradicating poverty in the State," he said during a memorandum of understanding signing ceremony between the Terengganu Skills Development Centre (Tesdec) and Universiti Sains Malaysia at the USM main campus in Minden.

"We must first develop the skills of our people. The buildings can wait since machines cannot operate if people are not trained to run them," he added.

Wan Mokhtar said Tesdec, which was established a year ago, functioned as a skills training centre. It can train 1,500 personnel and currently offers 20 short- and long-term courses.

"Courses offered are to meet the needs of industry, particularly the petrochemical sector. The State's projected human resources needs total 58,416 people by the year 2000," he added.

Wan Mokhtar also said a RM30 million Tesdec campus was being built on a 92- hectare site at Bandar Batu Marang.

"Once the campus is completed next year, all Tesdec courses now conducted at different locations will be centralised."

On a proposal to build a railway track from Kuantan to Kertih, Wan Mokhtar said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was expected to make an announcement on the matter soon.

He said the rail link was needed to transport industrial goods and might be financed by Petronas.

Today's signing ceremony was attended by Tesdec executive chairman Datuk Dr Abdul Latiff Awang, USM vice-chancellor Datuk Professor Ishak Tambi Kechik, his deputy (research and development) Datuk Professor Jamjan Rajikan, USM registrar Datuk Siti Mazonah Saat and Tesdec executive chairman Mazlan Ngah.

The MoU signing, witnessed by Wan Mokhtar, was sealed by Abdul Latiff on behalf of Tesdec, while Ishak represented USM.

Ishak said the MoU was for a three-year period initially where USM would assist Tesdec in Plastics Technology and Metal Machining courses.

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