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Road-Malaysia

ASIAN COUNTRIES SHOULD EMULATE M'SIAN ROAD PROJECTS, SAYS OFFICIAL

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 5 (bernama) -- Asian countries should emulate Malaysia's success in attracting private sector participation in privatised road construction, a senior United Nations agency official said today.

"They should learn from Malaysia. It has a proven track record of joint ventures between the government and private sector," said Dr M. Rahmatullah of Ascap, the UN economic and social commission for Asia and the Asia Pacific.

Citing Malaysia's 874km-long North South Expressway (NSE), Rahmatullah rated the NSE as a world class highway and that Malaysia was much more advanced than many of other Asian countries in this respect.

Rahmatullah, who is director of Ascap's transport, communications, tourism and infrastructure development division, was addressing the 21st World Road Congress here today.

He said Malaysia's dual-carriageway highways have attractive rest and recreational facilities that could attract foreign visitors when the 90,000km Asian highway project is completed.

Rahmatullah said privatisation would result in speedier completion of highways and further government participation would contribute to lower toll charges.

Malaysian Highway Authority Director of the Regulatory Division Ismail Mohamed Salleh said the expressway idea came from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in the 70's.

Ismail, who presented a paper on the NSE as part of Asian highway network, said the government privatised the project in 1988 to United Engineers (M) Berhad and the whole stretch of NSE was opened in 1994.

Besides providing fast and comfortable journey, the NSE also helped expedite the development of the new growth areas and increase the capacity of goods transportation.

The success of privatised highway construction in Malaysia had also attracted India which has invited Malaysian companies to invest in road projects in that country.

The Director-General (Road Development) and Additional Secretary of India's Ministry of Surface Transport Prafulla Kumar said the ministry planned to privatise four highway projects.

Kumar invited Malaysian companies, which were already involved in several road projects in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, to bid for the proposed highways.

He said another project, linking Jaipur and Kishangar stretching over 93km, was in the pre-qualification stage and he expected tender for it to be issued in six months time.

Kumar said the Indian government provided incentives to the private sector, including up to 40 per cent funding, adding that 20 more projects worth US\$250 million were in the pipeline.

He said Indians were generally receptive to tolled highways although there were several legal suits filed by opponents of such projects.

"Our aim is to link major cities...Delhi, Madras, Mumbai and Calcutta with four-lane highways instead of the present two-lane roads," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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