

01/12/2000

## Bringing Kedah to Kuala Lumpur

DISTANCE is a big factor in the Malaysian states' efforts to draw investments. Kuala Lumpur is where the action is. Upon arrival, most business travellers typically head straight for the federal capital and stay put until departure time. Even local commerce and industry tend to gravitate towards KL and its surrounding areas.

Naturally, when a state is removed from the country's epicentre of business, the task of attracting investors becomes more challenging. Kedah, whose capital, Alor Star, is almost 500 kilometres north of KL, has found a way to defy geography. It is the first state to set up an investment information bureau in KL.

The brainchild of Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain, the Kedah Trade Centre (KTC) is a broad avenue for marketing the state. The establishment of the centre is akin to the Kedah government bringing the entire state to the mainstream market, KL, under one roof. It is an aggressive move to help increase the inflow of investments.

'With the centre, potential investors do not have to go to Kedah to enquire about investment opportunities. They can come here to seek whatever details they need,' said Syed Razak after the centre's official opening on Sept 26 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. 'Investors can even request for appointments to see me here instead of going to my office in Alor Star.'

KTC functions as a one-stop reference point. If you want to find out something about Kedah, the centre is a good place to start. The idea is to provide quick and easy access to information about the state, particularly regarding investment opportunities. This is certainly useful to Malaysians and foreigners in KL who cannot make a trip to Kedah.

It is helpful that KTC is centrally located. The centre is on the 30th floor of UBN Tower in Jalan P. Ramlee, which is within the Golden Triangle. Some people may grumble about the city traffic, but getting to the centre is more convenient, by far, than catching a flight to Alor Star.

Run by the Kedah State Development Corporation (better known as PKNK, its Malay abbreviation), the centre will be useful to trade commissioners attached with foreign embassies in KL; chambers of commerce and industry; foreign and local investors; consultants and anybody else keen to know about Kedah.

The facilities include a resource centre, a conference room, an office cum business centre, a meeting lounge, a surau and Internet access. Because the centre is manned by a small team, the facilities are designed to be user-friendly.

KTC offers a range of information and services. Visitors can, for instance, obtain details about the many types of commercial and industrial properties available in Kedah. They can also get assistance with their project applications. Although the centre does not provide financing, it can give advice and identify financial institutions and government agencies which have such facilities.

According to PKNK chief executive Mohamed Azwar Mahmud, the response has been encouraging. The corporation has drawn up programmes to introduce KTC to the public, especially the foreign embassies. For example, on Oct 13, Syed Razak met officials from embassies of several Asian countries at the centre. In addition, functions in KL involving Kedah agencies will be held

at KTC.

The centre also doubles as a KL office for the state government and its agencies. Meetings, presentations and appointments scheduled in the federal capital can be held at KTC. Previously, hotel meeting rooms have to be booked for such occasions. While in KL, senior state government officers can use the time in between meetings and flights more productively by working at the centre.

(END)