

04/07/2000

Labuan proposes projects worth RM1.3b

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THE Labuan Development Authority has proposed to the Economic Planning Unit some 40 projects worth about RM1.3 billion to further develop the island.

LDA general manager Datuk Muhammad Mohd Nor said the proposals, aimed at making Labuan more investor- and tourist-friendly, would come under the 8th Malaysia Plan (2001-2005).

Under the 7th Malaysia Plan, LDA was allocated some RM269 million, of which about 95 per cent had been utilised, he said.

The proposals include an 8.5km bridge linking Labuan and mainland Sabah and a new airport.

"Initially the focus was to build on Labuan's reputation as an International Offshore Financial Centre ... now we also want to make the island an international tourist spot," he said.

But Mohammad told reporters over the weekend that these were just proposals and that the EPU would have the the final say in the matter.

Newly-appointed EPU director-general Datuk Iskandar Dzulkanain, who was also present at the meeting, said the proposals were being evaluated and "will be approved if they reflect the current and real situation in Labuan."

He said the bridge to link the island with Menumbok, Sabah, for example, might not be too appropriate under the present conditions because "one has to see the reality of things".

"Is there sufficient volume of traffic to utilise the bridge," he asked. "But if there is a private company interested in this project, it is welcome to do so."

Ongoing projects include landscaping to help realise Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's vision of Labuan being an island of beauty.

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