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Mahathir-Kota Perdana

KOTA PERDANA CAN BE A MODEL FOR CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION, SAYS DR M

BUKIT KAYU HITAM, March 5 (Bernama) -- The development of Kota Perdana-Asean Industrial Metropolis could be a model for other cross-border cooperation in the region, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the project showed Malaysia and Thailand had taken an approach towards cooperation rather than confrontation at the border.

Both sides would benefit from the cooperation, he said when launching the project here.

"I believe the project will succeed and will become a model for other cross-border cooperation within the region," he said.

With the development of the project, Thai workers could work in Malaysia and stay in their country just like Johoreans worked in Singapore but stayed in Johor, he said.

The RM3-billion project, covering 3,515 hectares, is to start soon and due for completion in 2010. It will provide world-class facilities for manufacturing and commercial sectors.

When fully operational, it is projected to attract an estimated RM20 billion worth of investments and create over 20,000 job opportunities.

The project will be developed by Northern Gateway Sdn Bhd owned by the Kedah government with 30 per cent equity and Benua Bayu Sdn Bhd the rest.

A total of 1,200 hectares will be developed for Free Trade Zone (FTZ) to encourage bilateral trade between Asean-member countries and expansion of Asean trade in the global marketplace.

The FTZ includes the Free Commercial Zone and Free Industrial Zone that would promote economic activities in commercial, media, information technology and communication, industrial, cargo and qualifying industrial.

As the southern gateway to Asia, the development will capitalise on the potential of the North-South route from Singapore to China and India.

The project will provide opportunities to tap into the markets of China and India and the increasing demand for consumer goods and services in the two countries.

It is also to support the Asean agenda on regionalisation and partnerships between Asean nations that will strengthen the economic and infrastructure base of the region to ensure a sound platform for development.

Kota Perdana is planned to be the first Free Trade Zone of its kind in the Asean region.

The key feature of Kota Perdana will be the "Transportation Spine", a three-kilometre-long corridor where land, rail and passenger transit are integrated.

Kota Perdana will also integrate about 70,000 dwelling units designed as complete residential communities with schools, shops, recreation space and public amenities to support a population of up to 330,000 people.

A new customs and immigration building and entrance gateway will be built there.

Dr Mahathir, in his message in the souvenir book published in conjunction with the launch, said the project would promote Malaysia's competitiveness in the world market and enable companies to continue to maintain and expand their operations in Malaysia especially in Kedah.

He said the FTZ would take advantage of the abundant competitive labour to reduce overall production and logistics costs as it was strategically

located at one of the pivotal junction of the "Asean silk-road" linking Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to the rest of Asia.

Kota Perdana would be the first large-scale integrated multi-modal industrial development in Malaysia to complement the implementation of AFTA (Asean Free Trade Area) by the year 2010, he said.

"It is poised to become the centre of investment opportunities in the Malaysia-Thailand border," he said.

He invited industrialists, entrepreneurs and small-and medium-size industries to take advantage of the opportunities available to position themselves to be competitive in the economic sector.

-- BERNAMA

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