

22/01/2002

Southwest Johor to be transport hub in the region

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SOUTHWEST Johor, the home of the fast-growing Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP), is set to become a complete distribution and transportation hub following a series of agreements signed by various parties yesterday.

Apart from a rail network linking the port to the national grid via the Gelang Patah Railway Station, the area is set to gain from the development of freight facilities, a power plant and a petrochemical industrial park over time.

The projects would pave the way for an efficient and effective integrated transportation system in Johor to transform the State into a competitive cargo hub in the region as well as a major player in the global aviation market.

Leading the way is an RM800 million investment for multimodal freight operations linking the Senai and Kuala Lumpur international airports with PTP and Johor Port which is set to begin operations in 2006.

It includes the construction of world-class freight facilities, road and rail connections with the aim of increasing the airfreight of the Senai airport from its current 7,000 tonnes to 100,000 tonnes by 2008.

The contract was signed by Senai Airport Terminal Services representative Datuk Ismail Yusof and Germany's Hochtief Airport GmBh aviation department head Edward J. Clayton.

Under an agreement between the State Government and Seaport Terminal (Johore) Sdn Bhd, 1,600 hectares at Serkat in Pontian will be turned into a petrochemical hub, a power plant and a bunkering zone.

The project, to be developed in stages, will supplement PTP's growth.

SKS Ventures Sdn Bhd and Tenaga Nasional Bhd signed an agreement to construct a 2,100MW coal-fired power plant at nearby Tanjung Bin.

To be split into three 700MW units, the power plant will come into operation in 2006 when the first unit is completed.

It will be connected to TNB's national grid through the 500kV and 275kV substations at Tanjung Bin and an existing 275kV conventional outdoor substation at Bukit Batu.

The new ventures, which have been provided for under Budget 2002, have the backing of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was on hand to witness the signings.

Earlier in his speech to launch the RM460 million Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd (KTMB) Rail Link Project to the Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP), Dr Mahathir said the new transport system would serve the port well.

"I am confident with (the introduction of) the rail service, PTP will handle even more goods and containers. I was told that more than 10 years ago, Port Klang handled about one million TEUs a year while our neighbours had 12 million TEUs (in cargo transshipment).

"With a little bit of persuasion, we now have PTP and Port Klang handling almost six million TEUs annually (between them)," Dr Mahathir said.

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