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Keeping tabs on Kedah's progress

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ALOR STAR, Fri. - A report card on progress achieved by the Kedah Government in its objective to become a developed State over the next eight years will be one of the highlights of the two-day Kedah Maju 2010 Convention which begins on Wednesday.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will open the convention on Thursday at the Dewan Seri Negeri, Wisma Darul Aman, here.

Convention secretariat chairman Datuk Ku Nahar Ku Ibrahim said the "report card" will be in the form of sectoral data on the State's growth one year after the launch of the Kedah Maju 2010 Action Plan by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Sept 21 last year.

"The tabling of the State's growth indicators will allow us to gauge whether we are on track in achieving our objective of becoming developed by 2010.

"It will also enable us to identify areas which we need to work on in order that the objective will be met," said Ku Nahar, who is also Kedah's newly-appointed State Financial officer.

Ku Nahar, who chairs the Kedah Maju 2010 technical committee, was one of those directed by Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain to help formulate the development plan.

He said the economic sector indicators included the amount of foreign direct investments which the State had managed to draw since the launching of the Kedah Maju 2010 Action Plan.

"We will also report on the status 110 development projects which form a major component in Kedah's objective of becoming a developed State."

Also being measured is the improvement in the quality of life for Kedah residents in terms of the number of new hospitals to be built, education opportunities and living standards.

"The indicators are important as we will not be able to have any basis for discussing whether or not we are on track to achieve our aim of becoming developed if there is no accurate data on what we have achieved and how much more we need to accomplish," said Ku Nahar.

The upcoming convention has had an overwhelming response from participants.

From an original projection of 300, the convention secretariat has received 450 confirmed participants so far.

They include Kedah civil servants, businessmen, industrialists, bankers, development project financiers and university students.

With one of the thrusts of the Kedah Maju 2010 Action emphasising material development that promotes positive social values, religion and its role in development will be a key aspect of discussion during the convention.

National Fatwa Council chairman Datuk Dr Ismail Ibrahim will be chairing a workshop session on the matter. Confirmed for attendance are a group of Kedah Government-sponsored Al-Azhar university graduates.

Another discussion subject of interest during the convention will be the challenges facing the State's economic planners in making Kedah a developed State.

A paper on the subject will be presented by the head of the National Economic Action Council's Special Consultative Committee on Globalisation, Prof Mahani Zainol Abidin.

Renowned academician Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Dr Awang Had Salleh will

meanwhile, present a paper on the strategic importance of education in turning Kedah into a developed State.

"After the convention, we might present to the Federal Government some of the important resolutions about what more we need to do to make Kedah developed.

"This will allow us to discuss with the Federal Government the strategies we might need," said Ku Nahar.