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Mahathir-Kota Putra

DR MAHATHIR WANTS KOTA PUTRA PROJECT SPEEDED UP

KUALA NERANG, July 8 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has directed the developers to speed up the construction of the Kota Putra project, the second Malaysia-Thailand checkpoint on the Kedah side, in Durian Burung, near here.

The prime minister said that the development of the project on the Malaysian side was rather slow.

He said Thailand had built a road from Songkhla to the border checkpoint with Malaysia whereas the award of the contract to build the road on the Malaysian side had yet to be completed.

"I want our side to speed up the construction of the infrastructures like roads so that the second border checkpoint in Kedah can be opened as soon as possible," he told reporters after a briefing at the project site here.

Kota Putra is the second border checkpoint in Kedah, after Bukit Kayu Hitam, for Malaysians and Thais to commute between the two countries.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport in Kepala Batas this morning for a one-day visit to Kedah, immediately boarded a helicopter to the Chebar Besar forest reserve in Ulu Muda to inspect the bamboo forest before heading for the Kota Putra project site.

He was briefed by Zamani Kasim, general manager of the developer, Northern Integrated Agriculture (NIA), on the project which involves 1,357 sq km and will take 15 years to complete.

The project started last year with the clearing of the forest and construction of an immigration, custom and quarantine centre.

Dr Mahathir said that there was no need to construct large and beautiful buildings at the site in the initial stages because after the area was developed the facilities could be enhanced.

With not so lavish structures the government could save on the cost of providing the infrastructures, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government was building the second border checkpoint because it wanted to develop eastern Kedah as the development in the state all this while was concentrated on the west.

The checkpoint would stimulate the economy in eastern Kedah and open up business and job opportunities for the residents there, he said.

"To develop this area, we proposed to have integrated farming by cultivating various types of freuts and setting up small factories for canning fruits," he said.

The area also had a lot of bamboo which could be developed into a cottage industry and the government would seek Japan's assistance to develop the production of bamboo goods, he added.

The prime minister also visited the Kuala Kedah Marina Harbour in Kuala Kedah where he spent about 45 minutes being briefed by BF Infra Sdn Bhd director Faridah Omar Shah on the project.

Construction on the RM26 million project on a 16ha site started in June last year and is scheduled for completion next month.

When completed, it can accommodate 44 sailing boats of up to 30m in length and will also have a double-storey clubhouse for the Kuala Kedah Yacht Club.

Dr Mahathir later had lunch at the house of his niece, Datin Yasmin Mashahor, where he met up with two of his sisters, Rafeah and Habsah.

He returned to Kuala Lumpur in the afternoon.

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