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Package-Reaction

JOHOR PROPOSES CARGO CITY TO BOOST ECONOMY

JOHOR BAHRU, May 22 (Bernama) -- Johor would complement the federal government's economic stimulus package by setting up a "cargo and airport city" in Senai, Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said today.

He said the proposed facility near the Sultan Ismail Airport here was part of an integrated transport service aimed at turning Senai into a regional cargo hub.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has mentioned that we need to seek new sources of growth, and we know that transport services are needed by the world market," he told reporters after launching the state-level Teachers Day celebrations here.

Abdul Ghani said the Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP) and the Pasir Gudang Port were also components of the integrated transport centre envisioned by the state government.

He said this when commenting on the RM7.3 billion strategic economic package unveiled by Dr Mahathir yesterday to stimulate the country's economy in the face of global uncertainties.

Abdul Ghani said it was a timely package that would bring long-term benefits to the country.

In IPOH, the Malaysian Federation of Private Educational Institution Associations welcomed the package, saying the additional RM500 million allocation for the Skills Development Fund would save 1,200 private vocational training centres from closing down.

Most of the centres had been in dire straits since new loans from the fund were frozen last March, and the new allocation would enable some 100,000 students to continue with their studies, its secretary-general, Nordin Abdul Malek, said.

It was estimated that 50,000 students of 1,800 accredited centres throughout the country had been forced to stop their studies because of financial problems, he said.

The 1,800 centres, accredited to the National Vocational Training Council, included 600 owned by the government, he said.

"We are thankful to the government for this additional allocation, which will ease the burden of students and enable private centres to continue operating," he told reporters.

The federation groups Perak Private Higher Education Institutes (IPTs), National Association of Bumiputera IPTs and National Association of Private Education Institutes.

In KUALA LUMPUR, Felda Chairman Tan Sri Dr Yusof Noor said the steps spelt out in the package would enable the land development authority to better plan its development strategies.

The package was important for Felda as it was an agency directly involved in economic activities through oil palm production and small- and medium-scale industries, he said.

"The investments to be made by Felda will be streamlined with the package and Felda will work out a revolving fund in Felda itself so that money spent would give returns to the whole Felda community," he said.

Taking cue from the prime minister's announcement, Felda would see to it that part of its financial allocation would be used to create a housing loan scheme to help Felda settlers and staff own houses, he said.

Rural Development Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid said the ministry would intensify economic activities for rural areas to narrow the income gap

between rural and urban people, which has been widening since 2000.

"One new approach is that all ways of implementing work the traditional manner should be revamped by using modern technology to boost the rural people's income," he told reporters after launching the Yamaha G-MAX Golf Buggy.

The package provides a RM300 million allocation for the rural sector.

"This allocation of RM300 million should be spent on modern technology to improve certain processes, like buying new boats for fishermen and speeding up the production of handicraft products," he said.

He said workers in the agriculture sector were more than 60 years old and their ability to boost output was limited.

On the other hand, the use of new technology would attract the younger generation to work in the rural areas, he said.

-- BERNAMA

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