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PERAK-INVESTMENT

PERAK GEARING FOR BIGGEST EVER PRIVATE INVESTMENT THIS YEAR

By: Arul Rajoo

IPOH, Jan 3 (Bernama) -- Perak is gearing up for its biggest ever private investment with the RM7.5 billion aluminium smelting plant, RM3 billion Proton City development and two university campus, taking shape this year.

State Industrial and Entrepreneur Development Committee chairman, Datuk Ramly Zahari, said that the aluminium plant and the Proton plant are scheduled to start operations by June.

The ground breaking ceremony for Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar)'s main campus in Kampar is slotted for Jan 12 while construction is ongoing for Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)'s main campus near Proton City which can accommodate more than 20,000 students.

Ramly said that all the projects, including the double track railway project between Rawang and Ipoh expected to be completed by end of 2004, would create thousands of job opportunities and have spin-off effects for small and medium industries.

"We have targetted RM10 billion foreign direct investment by 2005 and with the aluminium plant alone, we would have achieved 70 percent of our target," he said here today.

Ramly said that the plant was delayed for two years because the company could not get special electricity tariff for 9.5 sen per unit as Tenaga Nasional Berhad offered 15 sen.

However, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad gave the greenlight last week for the investors to build a 900 MW dedicated power plant.

The aluminium plant, the biggest in the region, would have an annual production of one million metric tonne.

He said that the plant would be located at a 136 ha site near the Lumut Port where a new township would also be developed and both are expected to create about 10,000 job opportunities.

The aluminium plant project would be undertaken by Masco Aluminium Sdn Bhd, a company set up by Charus Development Co, a New York-based joint-venture between the US, China and German companies.

The Proton City project was revived last year after being shelved in 1997 due to the economic crisis and was expected to commence production in June this year, with initial production of 250,000 cars a year.

It would be developed over four phases where a big township, an area for car part manufacturers, a test-drive circuit and a convention centre along with a hotel are also being planned.

Besides that, Ramly said that the State Government has also given a 320 ha (800 acre) land in Chepor near here to TNB to build a township, complete with its research and development (R & D) facilities where total investment could reach RM2 billion.

A national botanical garden has also been planned at a 809 ha site in Ulu Slim, similar to the Butchart Garden in Canada and this would spur the tourism sector, said Ramly.

He said that Perak would also continue to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) through various trade mission overseas and this year they would focus on China, Japan, India and the middle east.

Last year, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali went to three states in India where a total of RM234 million of investment was secured.

In 2001, Perak managed to attract RM857.6 million investment.

"We are confident that Perak will see an economic boom once all the said manufacturing industries, education and tourism projects take place," Ramly said. -- BERNAMA  
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