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Malacca on right track to success

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MALACCA is progressing well in its aim of being developed by 2010, 10 years earlier than Vision 2020. Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam had said earlier this year that the State was on the right path to this goal.

"Now, Malacca is 48 per cent closer to its target to have all the infrastructure and other facilities ready to be a developed state.

"The only thing is that the State has to ensure a growth rate of at least seven per cent annually. With seven years to go all parties have to play their part in ensuring continued growth," he had said.

This, he added, was attainable, as the State's growth had been higher than the national average every year.

He said the State's responsibility had always been in preparing the infrastructure but it would be up to the people to change their mindset to have more progress.

Development has continued to be the rule of the day in Malacca as new buildings and infrastructure spring up daily.

With a population of about 650,000, Malacca has transformed itself from an agrarian economy to an industry-driven force.

In the past, tourism was the major money earner for the State; now, more emphasis is given to high-technology and manufacturing.

The State's emphasis on these sectors are justified as they are expected to contribute 55 per cent to the State's Gross Domestic Product by 2010.

Now, industries account for more than 40 per cent of the GDP.

He said the State Government would not spare any effort to promote the State's manufacturing and tourism sectors as these were the main income earners.

The industrial sector focuses on semiconductors, electrical components, furniture, steel, aircraft, food and drinks.

Last year, it attracted more than RM1 billion in new investments and created thousands of new jobs.

Various new sectors have also been identified to start new industries including information communication technology, biotechnology and manufacturing.

To stamp his seriousness in seeing growth in those industrial sector, he appointed experienced and specialist personnel in those three fields under the Chief Minister's Department.

One of the major projects undertaken and completed in the State was the multi-million ringgit project to develop the Malacca International Trade Centre in Ayer Keroh.

Opened in June, the MITC comprises an exhibition hall, seminar and banquet facilities on the same premises.

Manufacturers can exhibit their products at MITC and also take orders.

Realising that tourism plays an important role in the State's economy, the State Government has worked in tandem with the private sector to build new tourism products.

While new hotels are coming up, the State has introduced new tourism products.

Under Mohd Ali's stewardship, the State has produced Jonker Walk at the famed Jonker Street, the Melaka Raya Walk and the Hang Tuah Mall, all completed between 2000 and 2002.

The State hopes there will be 10,000 hotel rooms from the 6,000 rooms

now.

Despite the rising number of rooms and new hotels, hotel occupancy rates have steadily gone-up despite the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak and the war in Iraq.

Hotel occupancy rates have been registering an increase now, with most hotel rooms fully booked during weekends.

To boost the industry further during weekdays, he has instructed all governmental departments and agencies to have their seminars here.

Furthermore, the agrotourism sector has also been given a boost when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the Selandar tropical farm in Jasin.

Another similar project, the Malacca Tropical fruit farm in Sungai Udang, was completed recently and is set to be another popular destination for those interested in agrotourism.

Also, the State Government is promoting the planting of the patented 'Melaka Delite' mangoes and using idle land in the State for this purpose.

Even padi fields like those in Bukit Rambai, Tanjung Kling and in Merlimau have been producing higher yields per hectare.

Judging from the State Government's efforts, it seems inevitable that Malacca will indeed achieve its target of becoming a developed State by 2010.