

'Gov't is committed to developing Bandar Malaysia'

MalaysiaKini.com

Mar 21st, 2016

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today pledged the government's commitment to ensure success of the Bandar Malaysia development project in Kuala Lumpur.

Critics have raised concerns over China's stake in the project, but Najib said their investment represents a major milestone in Bandar Malaysia's overall development.

"I can assure you that the Malaysian government is committed to see the project succeed," Najib said in his speech during a ceremony to announce the US\$2 billion (RM8.142 billion) investment in Bandar Malaysia by China Railway Group Ltd (CREC).

CREC, one of China's biggest state-owned companies, will be investing the amount to set up its regional centre in Bandar Malaysia.

"Because this project is important, we will make it work. We have seen the pictures, now we want to see the real thing," Najib said after viewing artist impressions of the entire Bandar Malaysia project.

He also said the government would consider offering incentives to boost investments in Bandar Malaysia.

Aside from opening up new job opportunities, Najib also said he hoped that the project will attract more tourists from China.

"Datuk Seri Nazri is here to support the project. I want him to spend more time in China," Najib quipped, in reference to Tourism and Culture Minister Nazri Aziz.

Largest trading partner

The announcement today was made three months after CREC's successful bid with its Malaysian joint-venture partner, Iskandar Waterfront Holdings (IWH), to acquire 60 percent equity in the Bandar Malaysia project from 1MDB Real Estate.

The quoted RM7.41 billion figure to acquire the land has yet to be completed and DAP MP Tony Pua were among lawmakers who had raised concerns over the deal.

The deal was inked during a signing ceremony on Dec 31, last year.

At the event, 1MDB chief Arul Kanda Kandasamy had described the deal as a "win-win partnership" and maintained that Malaysia still controls a majority stake.

China's ambassador to Malaysia, Huang Hui Kang, meanwhile, said that Malaysia has become China's largest trading partner in Asia for the eighth consecutive year.

Huang said that total trade between the two countries last year was estimated to be RM20 billion.

Huang, who has been in Malaysia since 2014, recalled that he had joined Najib to witness the launch of several major development project, including the Second Penang Bridge.

"All those projects are beneficial to our two countries and Malaysia's economy in particular.

"I believe under your leadership there will be more Chinese investments and more iconic projects in years to come," said Huang.

The Bandar Malaysia development is now under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model with the Finance Ministry holding 40 percent of the development company and the Iskandar Waterfront City (IWH)-CREC consortium holding the remaining 60 percent.

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