

DATE: 01/08/2007

Vision of modern, vibrant city

Penang to undergo transformation into major logistics, transportation hub

BUTTERWORTH: The Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) project will see the transformation of Penang into a modern, vibrant city and a major logistics and transportation hub.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who unveiled a list of projects for the state under the NCER initiative here yesterday, said they would turn Penang into the "Gateway to the Northern Corridor".

With price tags reaching billions, the projects are not only concentrated on the eastern portion of the island but also in the more rural south-west district and in Seberang Prai.

Here is a summary of the projects:

● Penang Sentral integrated transport hub

The RM2bil modern transportation and logistics hub will be built on the site of the Butterworth ferry terminal, railway station and former bus terminal which burnt down in May 2001.

The project, which aims to transform Butterworth into a modern metropolitan area, covers 557,418 square metres and will replace the current Butterworth ferry terminal and railway station.

The hub will integrate rail, ferry, monorail and land transport modes.

The project will be developed by Malaysian Resources Corporation Bhd and Pelaburan Hartanah Bumi-putra Bhd.

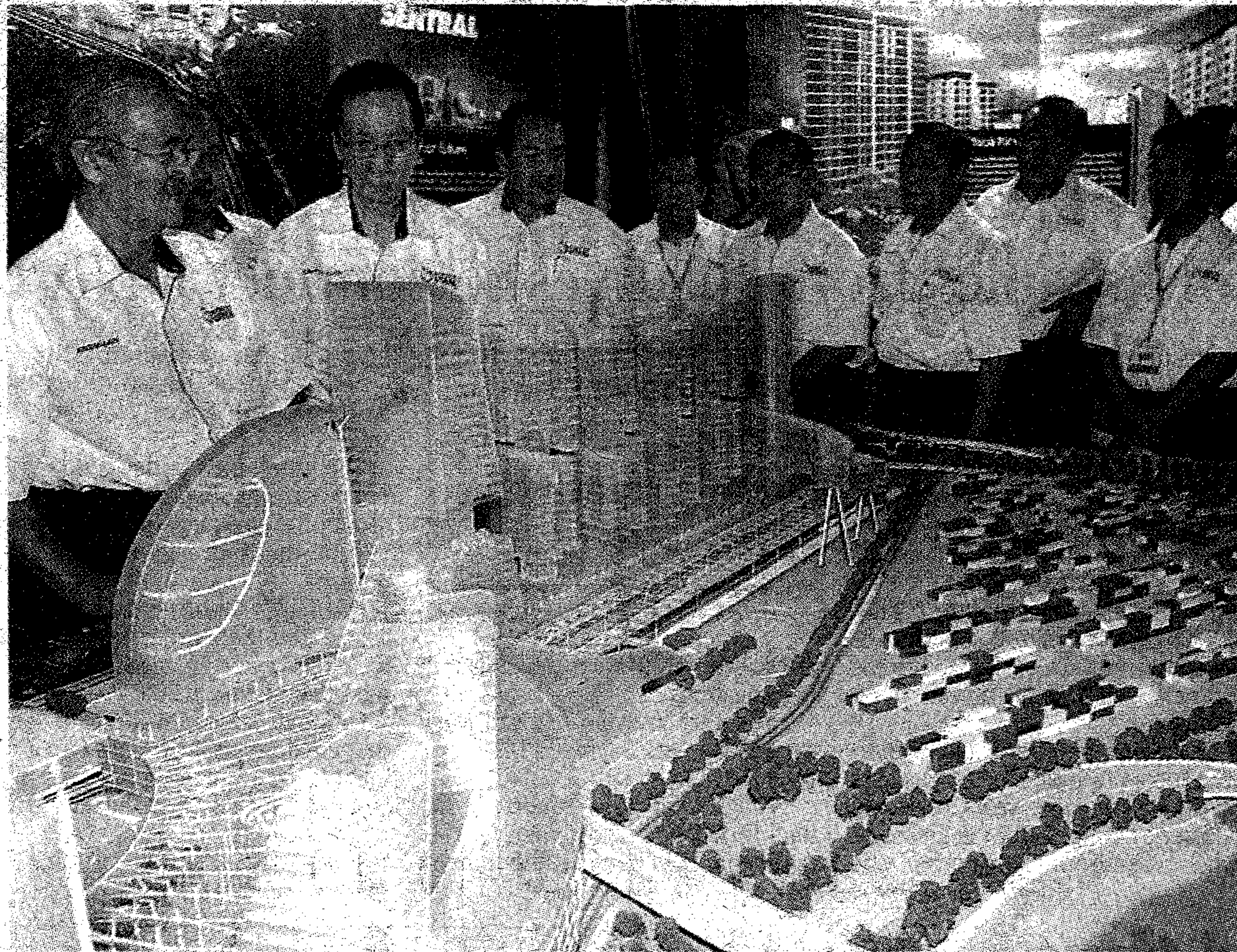
The first phase, involving the integrated transport and commercial outlets, is expected to take off next year and be completed in 2010.

In the interim, a RM5mil temporary bus terminal will be built at the site.

● Penang Global City Centre

The project will transform the site where the Penang Turf Club now stands in Bukit Gantung, George Town. It will be a modern city centre tailored for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions.

Besides an international exhibition and conference centre, the



Big plans: Abdullah (left) admiring a model of the Penang Sentral project in Penang yesterday. With him are Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon (second from left), Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali (fourth from left) and Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid (sixth from left).



RM18bil project will also have shopping complexes, two five-star hotels, commercial and residential properties, a state-of-the-art cultural centre and a 10.5ha park.

The project, which will occupy a 105ha site, is being developed by Abad Naluri Sdn Bhd, an associate company of Equine Capital Bhd, and will take 15 years to complete.

The project is expected to create 5,000 construction jobs.

● Second Penang Bridge

Announced earlier, the RM2.7bil second link between the mainland and Penang will be 23km long and link Batu Kawan in Seberang Prai with Batu Maung on the south-eastern corner of the island.

Construction of the longest bridge in South-East Asia is expected to start in November and be completed in 2011.

It will be built under a joint-venture between UEM Builders Bhd and China Harbour Engineering Co Ltd.

China will provide a US\$800mil (RM2.8bil) loan to the project, the largest amount given by China for a single project in a foreign country.

● Pulau Jerejak premier medical tourism centre

The 362ha island off the east coast of Penang island will be developed into a premier medical tourism centre in the region.

This is part of efforts to enhance Penang's strength in medical tourism.

Suitable incentive packages will be provided to develop the medical tourism industry to make it an engine of growth in the NCER.

● Penang-Butterworth fast ferry

A fast ferry service will be introduced for pedestrians and motorcycles next year as an addition to the present Penang ferry service. The ferry terminals at Butterworth and on the island will be upgraded.

● Penang Port expansion

Penang Port will be promoted as the leading port of the Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT).

Facilities at the port will be upgraded so that it will be able to handle more containers and bigger container ships.

● Bayan Lepas Airport expansion

The Bayan Lepas Airport will be made the premier air cargo hub in the IMT-GT and will handle high-quality perishable food items.

A new passenger and cargo terminal and additional runways will be built to cater for increasing air traffic.

● Penang Monorail

The monorail network will span a total of 37km. It will reduce traffic congestion on the island and in Seberang Prai.

● Swettenham Pier redevelopment

Swettenham Pier in George Town will be redeveloped into a new public transport system and commercial hub.

● Micro-Electronics Centre of Excellence

The centre will be built at the Universiti Sains Malaysia campus under a public-private partnership.

It will be used to increase the capability of local workers to shift from low-level manufacturing and assembling activities to value-added high technology activities such as the design of electronic, robotic and silicon items.

● Hospitality college

A college for hospitality studies will be built in Balik Pulau. A hotel will also be built there to provide practical training for its students.

● Khazanah Nasional Bhd regional office

Khazanah has opened its northern regional office in Penang to facilitate investments by government-linked and private-sector companies in the NCER.