

Najib: Johor Umno fully backs Iskandar project

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KUALA KANGSAR: Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has denied that Johor Umno was opposed to the multi-billion ringgit Iskandar Development Region project, as alleged by Singapore Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew.

"I just spoke to Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Ghani Othman and he said that Johor Umno fully supports Iskandar and will give its full co-operation to ensure its success.

"It's not true that Johor Umno is against it. I do not know how this came about as Abdul Ghani told me that they had indicated their support in two previous meetings. This, you must ask Lee Kuan Yew," he said after opening the Kuala Kangsar Umno divisional meeting here yesterday.

Lee was reported as saying in the Singapore daily, *Berita Harian*, that Singapore companies should evaluate whether they were welcome in Iskandar as there were

protests from Umno leaders, especially in Johor.

He said Singapore companies should not expect to get the same treatment from Malaysia that Hong Kong investors received in Shenzhen, China, to which Iskandar is often compared.

To this, Najib gave his assurance that Singapore companies investing in Iskandar would be accorded terms similar to those granted to investors from other countries.

We cannot give preference to any particular country.

*Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar
Foreign Minister*



Investors from Singapore are keen to come to Iskandar.

*Datuk Seri Hishammuddin
Hussein
Education Minister*

"However, this does not mean that Malay investors will be sidelined. We will look into other forms of incentives for them when they invest in Iskandar," he said.

In Kuala Lumpur, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Malaysia welcomed Singaporean participation in Iskandar but would not prefer any one country wishing to invest there over another.

"We want foreign investors

in Iskandar. We acknowledge the need for foreign investment but we cannot give preference to any particular country," Syed Hamid said in reply to Lee's remarks.

Syed Hamid said the country wanted everybody to invest in Iskandar, including Singapore.

"Malaysia has an open economy. We welcome investments. However, we don't want to favour one particular country," he said at the Wanita

Umno Kepong division meeting at the Seri Pacific Hotel.

In Kluang, Education Minister and Umno Youth chief Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, who is also from Johor, believed Singaporean investments would pour into Iskandar despite what some of the republic's leaders had said.

"I feel Lee's stand does not reflect the views of investors from Singapore who are keen to come to Iskandar," he said.