

# Free access zone plan for Iskandar scrapped

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**JOHOR BARU:** After lengthy deliberation, the proposal for a free access zone (FAZ) at the Iskandar Development Region (Iskandar) has been scrapped, Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said.

His announcement was made following concern that the zone would impose dual immigration procedures for entry into the country.

Ghani, who is also the joint chairman of the Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA), said accessibility to southern Johor still required documents but it would be facilitated with the use of a smart card.

"The FAZ no longer exists. It was just a proposal, but we do not need it."

Ghani was speaking after launching a conference on Iskandar investment and planning organised by the Malaysian Institute of Surveyors (ISM) Johor branch with the Economic Planning Unit here yesterday.

Ghani said he was confident the incentives announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for Iskandar would be appealing enough to transform it into an economic growth centre in the region.

He said Bumiputeras would not be marginalised although Abdullah had announced an exemption of the 30 per cent Bumiputera equity requirement in several areas under Iskandar.



**Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman says the FAZ is not needed**

"This is because the area where the equity exemption applies only covers 1,760 hectares, which is less than one per cent of the total area of Iskandar.

"There will be two areas which will be gazetted for the incentives. One is a 880-ha site in Gelang Patah and the other a 800-ha site in Danga Bay.

"Bumiputera participation in the two areas will not be eroded as they would be encouraging Bumiputera investment in the areas."

Earlier, Ghani said the multi-billion ringgit Iskandar would stimulate business activity and become the catalyst to spur demand for existing and new properties in south Johor.

He said the myriad of world-class services and facilities would draw the best brains here.