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# RM6b for high impact projects in ECER

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**KUALA TERENGGANU:** Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi announced yesterday an allocation of RM6 billion for high-impact projects to be implemented in the opening phase of the East Coast Economic Region (ECER).

The prime minister said the allocation would be made under a review of the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) programmes as well as additional allocations during the mid-term review of the 9MP.

"This (allocation) shows the government's commitment to realising the efforts in bringing development to the ECER in line with the master plan," he said at the launch of the ECER for Terengganu at Taman Awam Batu Burok here.

He also launched the ECER as a whole, with the economic region covering Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan and the Mersing district in Johor.

Present were Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh, Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob and Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman. Kelantan state executive councillor Datuk Husam Musa represented Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat.

The ECER, involving an investment of RM112 billion, is the third economic region to be launched by the prime minister this year, after the Iskandar Development Region (IDR) in Johor and the Northern Corridor Economic Region.

An initiative of national oil and gas

corporation Petronas, the ECER takes 66,736 sq km or 51% of Peninsular Malaysia.

The five major economic thrusts – tourism; oil, gas and petrochemical; manufacturing, agriculture; and education – will be given priority under the ECER plan to raise the incomes and quality of life of about 3.9 million people.

Abdullah also announced the setting up of the ECER Development Council to carry out projects and programmes which have been identified, and called for rapid implementation.

The ECER plan targets 227 projects valued at RM112 billion in 12 years.

Of the total, the federal government will take up 39% while government-linked companies (GLCs) will be involved in 14%. Another 20% will come from the private sector and the remaining 27% will be from private finance initiatives (PFI).

Up to 43% of the overall investment in the ECER will be allocated to improve communications facilities and infrastructure, Abdullah said.

The government has targeted gross domestic product (GDP) growth for the East Coast at 7.2% annually up to 2020 and average household income to be raised from RM2,267 in 2005 to RM5,227 in 12 years with implementation of the plan.

Under the development plan, the number of jobs created would increase from 1.4 million currently to almost two

million by 2020 with expanding business opportunities to raise the incomes of the people.

Abdullah said in bringing development to the region, the government would continue to preserve the culture and heritage of the East Coast.

Each state would have its own development theme under the ECER – Terengganu as the gateway for tourism and education, Kelantan as the trading and human capital development centre, and Pahang as the manufacturing and logistics hub.

He said the government will support plans to provide infrastructure aimed at raising its competitiveness.

Existing roads will be identified for repairs or upgrading as well as new roads will be built and the ports of Kemaman and Kuantan will be upgraded.

To eradicate poverty, five agropolitan projects, expected to benefit about 14,000 poor families, will be carried out.

The government also planned to make Kuala Terengganu a centre for information and communications technology (ICT) excellence with the setting up of a global animation centre.

It will also establish an international digital business exchange at Batu Rakit which will act as the prime Internet exchange for the region.

Abdullah also launched the Kuala Terengganu City Centre (KTCC) and the Garden of Knowledge yesterday. – Bernama

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