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Iskandar Malaysia on track to realise goals

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IMPRESSIVE: Najib says its progress phenomenal, has expanded the middle class

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THE government can look forward to a 10-fold return in its investment here as it has already received RM221 billion in committed investments to date, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday.

Since Iskandar Malaysia's formation in 2006, the government had pumped RM20 billion into it.

"This is most encouraging. Moving forward, we can even realise a return in investment 20 times that," he said at Iskandar Malaysia's 10th anniversary lunch yesterday.

Najib, who is also Iskandar Re-

gional Development Authority (IRDA) co-chairman, described the economic region's progress nothing short of phenomenal, with strong collaboration from both federal and state governments, communities and non-governmental organisations, as well as support from local and foreign investors.

"It has been an exciting journey as the economic region continues to transform itself."

He expressed satisfaction that the M40 group (those with an income of between RM3,000 and RM5,000) in Iskandar Malaysia had increased 7.9 per cent in the last seven years, while those earning between RM5,000 and RM10,000 had increased 9.8 per cent.

"What is more impressive is that the B40 group of those earning less than RM3,000 a month has decreased by 7.7 per cent.

"Based on the latest figures from the Statistics Department, household income in Johor has increased 14.4 per cent from 2012 to 2014, the highest compared with other states in Malaysia."

At the lunch, Najib launched the Iskandar Malaysia 10 Year Progress

Report, which documents the journey of the region for the past decade, towards realising Iskandar Malaysia's vision to be a "Strong and Sustainable Metropolis of International Standing".

He also launched Global Business Services as one of the promoted sectors here in place of financial and business services.

Qualified companies and workers under this sector can apply for the related incentives.

IRDA chief executive Datuk Ismail Ibrahim said throughout the 10 years of Iskandar Malaysia's development, significant changes could be seen; not just economically but also in social development.

This, he added, was the result of strategic, comprehensive and meticulous planning by the Comprehensive Development Plan Iskandar Malaysia.

"Initiatives to spur socio-economic activities have helped increase household income levels by 14.4 per cent from 2012 to 2014.

"About 702,000 jobs have been created in various economic sectors, including the services sector,

such as logistics, creative, tourism and education, since the inception of Iskandar Malaysia."

Ismail said 15 per cent of these jobs involved skilled workers and professionals, while 16 per cent were for semi-skilled workers.

"Iskandar Malaysia is on track to realise its long-term goal.

"We are optimistic that the region will continue to attract a steady flow of investment with projects that can benefit its community."

Iskandar Malaysia will continue to improve its infrastructure facilities, such as connectivity, in terms of public transport, roads and broadband networks.

Iskandar Malaysia is now in the third and last phase of its development.

Page 1 pic: Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** presenting a gift to former PM **Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi** at the **Iskandar Malaysia's 10th anniversary celebration** yesterday. With them is **Khazanah Nasional Bhd managing director Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar** (second from right).