

Iskandar Malaysia soars
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Johor growth corridor surpasses its five-year investment target

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday gave a strong endorsement of Iskandar Malaysia, describing it as a "towering achievement" for the country, since its inception five years ago.

He said the development corridor owed much of its success so far to a focused method of development, its location in a high-demand growth region and its complementary role with its neighbour, Singapore.

"The productivity, wisdom and achievement of Iskandar Malaysia prove it is a development corridor that is ahead of the others," said Najib after attending Iskandar Malaysia's fifth anniversary celebrations at Puteri Harbour here.

Earlier, Najib took a 30-minute helicopter ride to view the five flagship areas of Iskandar Malaysia.

"I have seen the aerial view of development and I am impressed with the achievement I have seen. This development is something that Malaysians can be proud of."

Najib said the RM77 billion worth of committed investments in the growth corridor had surpassed its original five-year target of RM47 billion.

Present at the ceremony were Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, Khazanah Nasional Bhd managing director Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar, former deputy prime minister Tun Musa Hitam, Johor assemblymen and members of parliament.

The growth corridor's first five years saw successful planning and building of the foundation projects within the five flagship areas of Iskandar Malaysia in southern Johor, which covers 2,217 sq km, three times the size of Singapore.

It includes the city of Johor Baru and the towns of Pontian, Senai, Pasir Gudang and the new administrative capital here.

Najib said these investments included various sectors ranging from education, industry, transport and tourism.

They complemented intangible development initiatives such as the Social Development Fund, to develop local capabilities.

"I believe the only sustainable development path is one that is inclusive and allows everyone to be part of the value creation process."

Najib said Iskandar Malaysia could mark Johor's return to its glory days as a major growth centre of the region during the Johor-Riau Empire in the 16th century.

"Today, Iskandar Malaysia stands as a proud symbol of Johor revisiting its historic past.

"Back then, Johor took advantage of its strategic location — situated at the crossroads between two straits, two oceans and two continents — and it succeeded because it was open and pragmatic."

Najib said the Federal Government was committed to ensuring Iskandar Malaysia became internationally renowned, and stressed that a good working relationship between federal and state governments would be vital in achieving that aim.

Najib also witnessed the official launch of 12 new committed investments during the same event. Twelve documents that represented RM1.73 billion worth of investments were exchanged.

Among them was a RM100 million deal between Multimedia Development Corporation, Iskandar Investment Bhd (IIB) and Frost and Sullivan-MDec to set up a Global Innovation Centre in Medini.

IIB, a subsidiary of government investment arm Khazanah, also sealed deals with DHL to establish a supply-chain centre of excellence. IIB also yesterday formalised its cooperation with the University of Reading and Ra Ta Land Sdn Bhd for separate projects.

Johor Corp, meanwhile inked an agreement with Evyap Sabun Malaysia Sdn Bhd, Kiswire Cord Sdn Bhd and Mopuflex Sdn Bhd.

Multimedia University (MMU), sealed a deal with Iskandar Education Enterprise Sdn Bhd and University of Southern California to introduce a Cinematic Arts Degree at MMU's new campus at EduCity, here.

UM Land confirmed their joint development with Seri Alam Properties Sdn Bhd-Raffles Campus Pte Ltd, while highway operator PLUS Bhd will undertake a project to install street lighting on the Second Link. Iskandar Malaysia Studios Sdn Bhd also entered into a deal with Universiti Teknologi Mara.

Azman, in his speech, said Iskandar Malaysia had achieved a strong momentum, with the timely delivery of major infrastructure, iconic development and catalyst projects.

"Stemming from traditional and knowledge economies, the opportunities and benefits for the rakyat and businesses in Iskandar Malaysia in the near future are very encouraging. Increased tourists arrivals are expected from 2012 onwards, thousands of students in a thriving education sector, improved public infrastructure, more than 55,000 new jobs, and enhanced safety and security overall."

The plan for Iskandar Malaysia was put into action in March 2006 and is projected to be completed by 2025.

On another matter, Najib said the ongoing discussions on the Points of Agreement between Malaysia and Singapore would be brought up at his next meeting with his Singaporean counterpart, Lee Hsien Loong, next month.

He said bilateral relations between the two countries had been improving, and that more discussions were on the cards on matters such as improving connectivity between the two nations and iconic projects to be jointly developed by both sides.

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