

theSun

TELLING IT AS IT IS



No. 4353 PP 2644/12/2007
Thursday
September 20, 2007
www.sun2surf.com



Get a new Mercedes-Benz for just RM100?
Find out how on page 6 & 7.

» Police looking for woman in **red** pg4

» Tales from the **heart** pg32

Entertainment

Mega plans for eastern corridor

KUALA LUMPUR: A whopping RM112 billion will be invested in the East Coast Economic Region which covers the Malay heartland of Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and Mersing district in Johor – much of it on road linkages and other infrastructure facilities – over the next 12 years.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will launch his administration's latest mega initiative in Kuala Terengganu and Kota Baru on Oct 30 and in Kuantan the next day.

He had earlier this year launched the Iskandar Development Region and the Northern Corridor Economic Region.

Based on a briefing by Tan Sri Mohd Hassan

Merican, president and chief executive officer of Petronas, which is the master planner for ECER, this is a rundown on what the programme covers:

Where will the money come from?

» 20% from the private sector, 27% via private finance initiative and the rest by the government (via allocations under the five-year plans).

How big is the area covered by the plan?

» 66,736 sq km or 51% of Peninsular Malaysia.

Why does this region need this plan?

» There is economic imbalance as the ECER states have among the lowest average household income in Malaysia. Terengganu and Kelantan have the highest poverty rate, accounting for 15.4% and 10.6% poverty in the country, followed by Pahang at 4.9%.

How will the people benefit?

» 561,000 jobs will be created by 2020 and hardcore

poverty will be wiped out.

» Gross Domestic Product will be raised to 7.2% by 2020 from 5.7% in 2005. Terengganu and Pahang are targeted to grow at 7.5% and Kelantan at 6.4%.

What are the main projects under ECER?

» Phase Three of the East Coast Expressway linking Kuala Terengganu to Kota Baru, Phase Four of the expressway connecting Kuantan to Johor Baru and a road linking Temerloh to Kuala Pilah.

What sectors will drive development?

» Education, tourism, oil and gas, petrochemical, manufacturing and agriculture.

What's the big challenge?

» Excluding government-owned land, 40% of the land in the ECER are Malay Reserve Land. Setting up a trust to develop the land is one approach. Owners of the land can be members of the fund.



CABINET HALTS COMMERCIAL DRIVERS' HEALTH-CHECK SCHEME AFTER OUTCRY

e-Kesihatan postponed

by **Llew-Ann Phang**
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Hit by a fierce chorus of protests from doctors and drivers, the health screening scheme called *e-Kesihatan* to build a database on the health status of commercial vehicle drivers has been shelved indefinitely.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek said yesterday that the cabinet decided that the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) should coordinate its implementation.

"The cabinet has decided that in the best interest of this programme, it should be temporarily postponed as this kind of privatisation project should be referred to the EPU.

"The EPU will then coordinate the implementation (of the programme) with the various government agencies, including the Ministry of Health, for the screening of commercial vehicle drivers," he told Bernama.

Earlier, Road Transport Department director-general Datuk Ahmad Mustapha Abdul Rashid said in a statement the government had postponed the programme which was to start on Oct 1.

The scheme had created controversy after Supremme Systems Sdn Bhd got the contract from RTD on Sept 3. *theSun* front-paged the issue on

Sept 11 (see *flashback*), questioning the decision to have an intermediary to handle the scheme.

The RTD had announced that all commercial vehicle drivers who wish to apply or renew their public service vehicle licence and goods-vehicle driving licence must undergo compulsory medical examination and urine test at 611 panel clinics through *e-Kesihatan*.

However, the ruling which also

requires the estimated 800,000 commercial vehicle drivers to pay RM80 each at the post office, faced strong objection from various quarters. The Malaysian Medical Association said the appointment of panel clinics contravened the Medical Act.

Supremme Systems was also criticised for imposing a high fee. The company retorted that it would get only RM8 from the RM80, with the lion's share going to doctors and laboratories.

Primary Care Doctors' Organisation Malaysia (PCDOM) president Dr Molly Cheah was delighted with news of the postponement.

"The RTD should not have tried to implement it in the first place – trying to control doctors ... it does not fall in their domain," she said, recommending that the RTD work with the Health Ministry instead of giving it to a third party without the expertise to operate the scheme.

Malaysian

Medical Association president Datuk Dr Khoo Kay Lin welcomed the postponement but hoped that it would not be indefinitely.

"Indefinitely is not very good news. There should be a reasonable deadline. The RTD should work with the experts, but it must not take too long because we would be risking the population," he said.

He said among the medical examination approaches to work on are checks for diabetes, high blood pressure and thorough examinations for elderly commercial drivers, besides detection of alcohol and drug abuse.

Among the concerns over Supremme System managing the scheme was that it could conduct surprise checks on panel clinics.

Responding to *theSun's* report yesterday, PCDOM's Cheah said: "I'd like to ask (Supremme Systems executive director) Datuk Nordin (Yahaya) how he has authority to do that, under what Act and what law?"

Under the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act, enforced last year, general inspections on private clinics can be conducted by only a designated Health Ministry officer.

"This (Supremme Systems' claim of authority to conduct inspections) is the problem with dealing with a third party involving a ministry that is not even responsible for healthcare. If this is allowed, any Tom, Dick and Harry can walk into the clinic (to conduct inspection)," Cheah said.

Nordin had said inspections would be legal as long as the clinics were on the *e-Kesihatan* panel.

Cheah said that doctors felt compelled to submit to the scheme because they feared being blacklisted, and because there was no mechanism to protect the profession.

She said PCDOM – an organisation set up to address issues faced by primary care doctors – proposed last year a similar scheme to the RTD but there was no response. Cheah claimed that *e-Kesihatan* was a project that had been "hijacked by people who are not doctors and who are dictating to doctors how to do their job".



MUMS ALWAYS MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE AT BREAKFAST

Mums know what it takes to give their children a champion start every day. MILO® is action-packed with Natural Goodness (of malt, skimmed milk and cocoa), ACTIGEN-E® and PROTOMALT®. It is also high in protein, calcium, magnesium, iron and vitamins – important nutrients for growing children.

