

Zooming in on mainland

The Penang government wants investors to bring further development and create more jobs in Seberang Prai as the island is fast running out of industrial land. >3

By **RENA LIM**
rena@thestar.com.my

MAINLAND Penang, which has been the "poor cousin" to the island for so long, holds the future of the state, said Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow at the Annual Luncheon Dialogue at E&O Hotel in George Town.

With that in mind, he said the state will be working to make Seberang Prai more livable.

"Since George Town was gazetted as a Unesco World Heritage site in 2008, the development on the island has been stretched and as a result, there are limited spaces here now.

"With the town area being a Unesco site, development or refurbishing works will also have to comply with the strict standards, thus making the space very limited on the island.

"But at the same time, we have also moved our focus to the land in Batu Kawan, where development is already taking place," said Chow.

He was speaking during the 'Penang 2030: Partnership with Commerce and Industry' dialogue session with the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MICCI) yesterday.

A 10.12ha plot in Batu Kawan near Nibong Tebal is currently under development by Aspen Group together with IKEA Southeast Asia.

The mega-scaled mixed development project is a multi-phased and multi-faceted development project for a modern community with star business hotels, international school, serviced residences, office towers and a transportation hub.

Chow said more and more industries are bringing development and job opportunities to Seberang Prai.

"As we are running out of industrial land on the island, the mainland is a good spot for many industries, as they usually require hectares of land.

"The mainland has a lot of potential in attracting investors, as it has all the basic networks in place in terms of road transports.

"This was why we did not feel the need to propose the Penang Transport Master Plan there," he said.

In terms of improving the traffic heading to industrial areas in the mainland, Chow said they are looking at a project for a bypass from Juru Auto-City, Prai to Sungai Dua, Butterworth to ease road users through traffic.

During the dialogue, Chow also revealed that the state has been working on the blueprints for the

Mainland holds Penang's future

State government keen on seeing more industrial growth in Seberang Prai which has vast potential



Chow (middle) speaking at the Annual Luncheon Dialogue with the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry at E&O Hotel in George Town.

Penang 2030 vision for a 'family-focused, green and smart state' announced back in August.

He said the state is in midst of finalising the blueprints and strategies so that the strategies complement one another well under the umbrella of Penang 2030.

The plans include the Penang Green Agenda, the Penang Youth Blueprint, Penang Agriculture Masterplan, Penang Tourism Masterplan and Penang Digital Transformation Plan.

"Our goal is to include everyone as we progress as a society, because there is only that much the state can do and much will have to be complemented by the private sectors," added Chow.

One similar example was the rule of having developers comply with building at least 30% of affordable housing units for each housing project they are doing

after land acquisition.

"This is to ensure that the public can afford some units, as those in the middle-income group are always stuck when they are looking to buy properties.

"The middle-income citizens usually cannot qualify for social housing units and cannot afford the higher price units at the same time, so they are stuck with renting rooms or units on ends.

"In the past five years, the state focused a lot more on affordable housing projects and tried to take away the pressure from middle-income citizens who do not qualify for both ends on housing units.

"At the same time, we also want the private sector to be invested in building the nation as this will benefit the citizens, the local workforce and the industries," said Chow.

MICCI Penang chairman Michel Van Crombrugge said the theme

for discussion on the vision for Penang has rightfully been chosen this year as the event will join many parties together for common goals.

"Through the dialogue session here today, we are able to bring our members, who are mainly captains of the industry and commerce to come together with the state in pursuing our common goals.

"We hope that MICCI can continue to be a premier voice in raising issues and concerns from the stakeholders to the state for the upcoming years," said Crombrugge.

The 5th Annual Luncheon Dialogue is a yearly dialogue and networking session held with state government officials or representatives to foster a clearer understanding of socio-economy of the state and its effects on stakeholders, investors and the public.

SUMMARIES

Zooming in on mainland The Penang government wants investors to bring further development and create more jobs in Seberang Prai as the island is fast running out of industrial land. >3

MAINLAND Penang, which has been the "poor cousin" to the island for so long, holds the future of the state, said Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow at the Annual Luncheon Dialogue at E&O Hotel in George Town.