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## NCER surpasses investment target at RM26.3b

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by **NURUL SUHAIDI**

THE Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) through the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) has surpassed its initial target investment at RM26.27 billion.

Thus, it continues to recover stronger from the pandemic this year catalysed by a positive regional socioeconomic outlook.

Prime Minister (PM) Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob after chairing NCIA's 28th Council Meeting said NCER is currently facing a bright economic outlook, whereby the region is projected to achieve a robust regional GDP growth of 6.5% to 6.9% in 2022.

The strong recovery momentum is spurred by positive investor sentiment, the prioritisation of catalytic projects and programmes, and the government's attractive incentives through NCIA.

"The original target was RM16 billion. This achievement will create 30,573 new jobs for the people," said Ismail Sabri.

From the first quarter of 2021 (1Q21) to the 3Q21, NCER accounted for the majority of approved manufacturing sector investments in Malaysia, bringing 61.4% of total investments in the country.

In the same period, NCER's

export trade performance also rose 20% year-on-year, accounting for 36% of the country's exports, driven by growth in the manufacturing of electrical and electronics and medical devices, as well as palm oil products.

As of 3Q20, the unemployment rate in NCER jotted at 4.1% while the labour force participation rate has increased steadily to 67.8% and is expected to remain uptrend in 2022.

The PM added that NCIA's post-pandemic recovery efforts for NCER are in line with the government's National Recovery Plan (NRP) and 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP).

Under the 12MP, NCER has undertaken a three-pronged approach, namely facilitating private investment; implementing key strategic projects; and empowering the people via people-centric human capital programmes as outlined in the NCER Strategic Development Plan (2021-2025) and post Covid-19 strategic framework.

Apart from that, high-impact projects such as Kedah Rubber City (KRC), Chuping Valley Industrial Area, Perlis Inland Port, Silver Valley Technology Park, and NCER Technology Innovation Centre will be executed to attract more private investments.

On the other hand, the implementation of strategic projects and private investments in NCER have contributed to sustainable income for the people which has benefitted almost 68,000 individuals from

30 districts since its establishment in 2019.

NCIA has also empowered the participants of its e-commerce marketing programme to accelerate the trend and bolster their income during the pandemic.

Additionally, from the empowerNCER dan JomNiaga@NCER programmes, 5,675 people from local communities have upskilled their entrepreneurship and generated a cumulative income of RM71.9 million.

Meanwhile, 9,313 graduates and retrenched workers were given jobs via the NCER Talent Enhancement Programme and JomKerja@NCER.

Women representing 20,836 households are currently getting cost of living support through the cashless card system under NCIA's Kasih Ibu NCER programme in Kedah, Perak and Perlis, in line with the 12MP's aim of eradicating hardcore poverty by 2025.

Kasih Ibu NCER recipients have been able to earn additional income through the empowerNCER and JomNiaga@NCER programmes, lifting them out of poverty.

Additionally, tuition is offered to 9,150 students from bottom 40% families to assist them in securing placement in higher education institutions.

As for the micro, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, 16,667 have benefitted from the financing scheme offered under the entrepreneurNCER programme through strategic collaboration with Maybank and Agrobank, with

a combined value of loans approved at RM223.8 million.

This year, another 22,500 MSMEs are expected to benefit with the inclusion of CIMB and Affin Bank as NCIA's new strategic partners for entrepreneurNCER.

Meanwhile, Dana Usahawan NCER (DU@NCER) has benefitted 32 local businesses, resulting in 1,582 new jobs.

"The success of NCIA programmes has aided the country's economic recovery efforts, in line with Keluarga Malaysia's goal of ensuring a fair, equitable, and inclusive economic distribution for all Malaysians," said the PM.

Separately, during the meeting, he also witnessed the exchange of collaboration documents between NCIA and various stakeholders and investors with regards to the development of KRC.

"KRC is one of the various game-changer projects implemented by NCIA in collaboration with the Kedah government to transform the state into a developed state, thus narrowing the regional development gap," Ismail Sabri said.

He added that the project reflects the government's commitment to bringing large-scale development to less developed areas in the country.

Meanwhile, Kedah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor said Kedah's economy has made a strong rebound in 2021 on the back of private investments in export-driven manufacturing sector, particularly in the production

of rubber gloves, electrical and electronic products, as well as renewable energy.

He added that KRC will further fuel the investment growth for Kedah.

"I am confident that KRC can follow in the footsteps of Kulim Hi-Tech Park in attracting quality investments that can generate spillover effects to the people of Kedah, especially in terms of new employment and entrepreneurship opportunities," he noted.

He added that Kedahans from all walks of life will benefit from the implementation of high-impact NCIA strategic projects in the pipeline such as NCER AgriBio Economic Zone, which includes Estate Management Model 2.0 for paddy cultivation in Pendang and Bandar Baharu Innovation Hub, Kedah Science Technology Park, Integrated Economic and Community Centre or iCON in Sik, Baling and Yan, as well as Kedah Digital Library.

Commenting further, NCIA's CEO Datuk Seri Jebasingam Issace John said the KRC project is part of NCIA's efforts to support the government's goal of accelerating the country's economic recovery and growth post-Covid-19.

"NCIA is very focused and committed to implementing strategic development programmes that are in line with the NRP and 12MP to empower the people and business community in NCER towards economic recovery and growth," Jebasingam said.