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JOHOR BAHRU: The Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) is drawing increasing interest from international investors, particularly from Japan, South Korea, China, and Europe, as Johor positions itself as a strategic gateway to the Asean market.

Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) chief executive Datuk Mohd Noorazam Osman said recent investment enquiries received by the Invest Malaysia Facilitation Centre Johor reflect strong interest from these key markets, underscoring Johor's emergence as a promising regional growth hub.

"This is a very positive outlook not only for Johor, but also for Malaysia as a whole. Amid ongoing global volatility, investors are looking to Asean as a promising entry point into new regional markets," he said when met after speaking as a panellist at the Nikkei Forum Medini 2025: Driving Asia's Innovation Hub held here yesterday.

On key investment sectors, Mohd Noorazam said Japanese investors are particularly drawn to electrical and electronics, financial services, technology, and the digital economy.

Asked about confirmed Japanese investments, he noted that while specific names could not yet be disclosed, several companies had requested meetings with Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi, a clear indication of their strong interest.

"We have also received enquiries from Japanese banks acting on behalf of their clients. We are facilitating engagements, particularly with institutions such as Mizuho Bank and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, with whom the Economy Ministry recently signed a letter of intent," he added.

Meanwhile, Iskandar Investment Bhd (IIB) president and CEO Datuk Idzham Mohd Hashim said Medini is fully equipped to welcome new investors, supported by comprehensive infrastructure and a business-friendly ecosystem.

He said the "plug and play" development model implemented in Medini enables investors to begin operations immediately, without delays.

"The land is ready, and essential utilities, including electricity, water, fibre optics, and cabling, are already in place. Instead of starting from scratch, investors can establish operations in Medini, which already hosts nearly 40 international companies.

"These businesses are thriving, and it's now a matter of scaling up. At IIB, we see ourselves as growth partners, committed to helping businesses succeed in Medini," he said.

Idzham also emphasised Medini's high quality of life, supported by amenities such as pocket parks, Sireh Park, golf courses, Legoland, and the revitalised Johor Zoo, all catering to diverse lifestyles and income groups.

Commenting on global uncertainties



(From left) Moderator Koori Takahashi, Idzham and Noorazam at the panel discussion. - BERNAMAPIC

and Singapore's recent downward revision of its gross domestic product growth forecast to 0.2%, he acknowledged that some investors are adopting a wait-and-see approach due to geopolitical tensions.

There may be short-term corrections, such as what Singapore is experiencing, but we believe these are temporary. Asean remains one of the world's fastest-growing regions, with a youthful and expanding middle class. Young people account

for about 50 to 60% of Southeast Asia's 650 million population," he said.

He also highlighted the natural geographic advantages of Johor and Singapore as investment destinations, further bolstered by political stability and the absence of natural disasters.

On IIB's development strategy, he stressed that focus is not solely on physical infrastructure but also soft infrastructure.

"Soft infrastructure includes talent development, facilitation by

government agencies, and enabling businesses to access markets.

"That's the ecosystem we're building, not just buildings and roads, but the support systems businesses need to thrive."

The two-day Nikkei Forum Medini 2025 forms part of broader efforts to position Johor as a regional innovation hub, supporting the JS-SEZ initiative to attract high-quality investments and integrate value chains between Malaysia and Singapore. - Bernama