KERATAN AKHBAR

TARIKH : 24 JUN 2025

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIME

MUKA SURAT : 6

Bank Expand Presence in JS-SEZ

OVER RM24B COMMITMENTS

BANKS EXPAND PRESENCE IN JS-SEZ

6 groups increasing investments in Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone

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MALAYSIAN banking groups are stepping up their investments in Johor, with financing commitments for the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) surpassing RM24 billion.

This figure is expected to grow as the initiative gains momentum.

OCBC Group plans to channel an additional RM3 billion in financing by the end of 2025, focusing on real estate, oil and gas, manufacturing, and data centres.

This comes on top of the RM11 billion already committed to Johor businesses since early 2024, underscoring OCBC's support for the JS-SEZ.

In April, CIMB Group Holdings Bhd pledged RM10 billion in financing to bolster cross-border economic activity in the zone.

The group also launched the CIMB Asean Financial Passport, a solution designed to provide seamless regional banking services, from regulatory guidance to account onboarding and customised financing, to support businesses expanding across borders.

Further reinforcing investor confidence, six banks signed letters of intent (LoIs) with the Economy Ministry to back JS-SEZ development.

These include CIMB, Maybank, CGS International, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp Malaysia, Bank of America Malaysia and HSBC Malaysia.

Combined, these institutions have identified RM2.35 billion in prospective investments and are expected to play a key role in attracting capital for priority sectors, such as logistics, healthcare, innovation, and sustainability.

OCBC Group chief executive officer (CEO) Helen Wong emphasised the bank's long-standing ties with Johor, where OCBC Malaysia's first branch was established in 1917.

The group operates eight branches in the state out of 38 nationwide.

Wong highlighted OCBC's "One Group" strategy, an integrated model that brings together OCBC Bank, Great Eastern Holdings, Bank of Singapore, and its leasing and wealth management units.

This structure, she said, positions the group to deliver financial solutions to drive cross-border growth and collaboration.

The announcement was made during a courtesy visit by Wong and OCBC senior executives to Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi at his official residence in Saujana.

Onn Hafiz welcomed the commitment, calling it a strong endorsement of Johor's investment climate.

""The group's commitment of over RM11 billion, with another RM3 billion targeted by year-end, reflects strong private sector support for our economic vision. We look forward to deepening this collaboration," he said.

OCBC Bank (Malaysia) Bhd CEO Tan Chor Sen said that the group began promoting the JS-SEZ to international investors even before the agreement's official signing in January, engaging key agencies, such as Iskandar Regional Development Authority, Malaysian Investment Development Authority, and Invest Johor.

He said that OCBC's extensive international network, particularly in Greater China, positions it well to attract inbound investment and support Malaysian business expansion.

Great Eastern Life Assurance (Malaysia) Bhd CEO Datuk Koh Yaw Hui affirmed the group's support through a full range of life, general, and takaful insurance offerings aligned with the region's economic ambitions.

The JS-SEZ is a landmark bilateral initiative between Malaysia and Singapore, aimed at boosting cross-border trade, attracting high-impact investments and accelerating infrastructure development in innovation-led sectors.