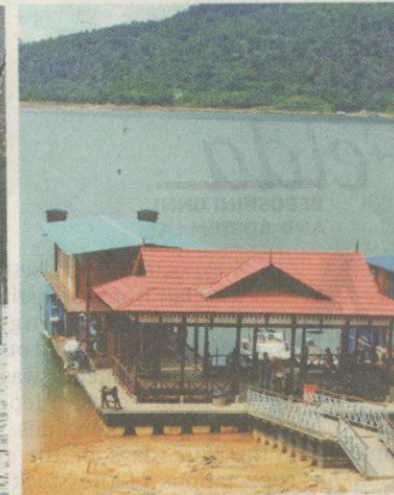




# PROGRESSIVE TERENGGANU



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Tasik Kenyir, with its array of attractions, is set to spearhead the state government's focus on tourism as the main driver of the economy.

# The 'gold mine' in Tasik Kenyir

**T**ERENGGANU is set to create history next year as the only place in Asia to have a duty-free island in a lake.

The move to make Pulau Bayas duty-free will transform the 36,000 square hectare Tasik Kenyir, created as a water reservoir for the Sultan Mahmud hydroelectric plant, into a unique tourist destination.

With rows of shops on the island selling branded and high-quality goods from all over the world, shopping will be added to the list of things visitors can look forward to when they visit this largest man-made lake in Southeast Asia.

Since its creation in 1985, Kenyir has carved a name among anglers as a fishing haven and among nature lovers for its rich flora and fauna.

Slated to open in time for Visit Terengganu Year 2013, the duty-free area of Kenyir Trade Centre (KTC) on Pulau Bayas is so far the biggest project undertaken by the state government, which endeavours making tourism the state's new economic backbone.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Said said the decision to diversify the state's source of income was necessary as royalty from oil and gas would eventually dry up.

"We cannot rely on the income from oil and gas forever. Hence, the



state government is working towards making tourism the state's main economic and development engine."

The focus is not without justification as Terengganu is blessed with an array of tourism assets such as its 240km stretch of beaches, islands, lakes and exotic handicrafts.

"All these, including the exquisite Terengganu batik and songket which do not need any further introduction, have the economic potential as tourism products."

The state government has allocated RM100 million this year to turn Tasik Kenyir into a major tourist destination. Other than the KTC, other development projects include new and improved facilities such as an esplanade, a jetty terminal and living quarters for Customs staff.

Though the elevated status of Pulau Bayas will turn it into an attrac-

tion, the island is not the only place that one can visit in Kenyir.

Ten islands dotting the lake are being developed as theme islands for the "Kenyir Island Hopping" programme. Among the must-go is the 2.7-hectare orchid island, which is actually a group of three islands: Hulu Selimbar, Hilir Selimbar and Belit that will be linked by bridges.

The world's biggest and some of the smallest orchids will be among the more than 3,000 orchid species on display here.

When it blooms, the tiger orchid (*grammatophyllum speciosum*) will certainly steal the show with its dinner-plate-sized flowers. But the tiny pinhead orchid (*taeniophyllum sp*) will also be an attraction and an eye opener as its full features can only be viewed using a magnifying glass.



Defying its gruesome name, Pulau Terengganu Mati will come alive with the chirping of about 120 species of birds as it becomes the bird island, while the 5.8ha Pulau Sah Kecil is transformed into an island of herbs, offering visitors the chance to have a first-hand look at various medicinal plants such as tongkat ali (*eurycoma longifolia*), kacang fatimah (*labisa pumila*), misai kucing (*orthosiphon stamineus*) and mas cotek (*ficus deltoidea*).

Not only that, visitors can go back home with herbal concoctions which are freshly brewed on the island.

Meanwhile, a RM545 million sports and recreation academy will be built on Pulau Serindit, complete with hotels and chalets.

Despite Tasik Kenyir being given a modern outlook with the provision

of various facilities, its rich history is not forgotten.

The skeleton of the 16,000-year-old Bewah Man, discovered in Gua Bewah in 2009, is set to be the main historical attraction of Kenyir.

A boat terminal equipped with escalators will enable visitors to view the neolithic find in the comfort of modern amenities.

It is a wise and strategic move by the state government to transform the historic site as one of the tourist attractions in Kenyir, underlining the fact that the area will once again create history for Terengganu.