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to know country file

Abolishing work permit? Ask locals first — FSM

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By Gordon Chin

KOTA KINABALU: A proper survey should be done to find out if Sabahans are ready for an open door policy that allows Sarawakians and West Malaysians to work or do business in Sabah without a work permit, according to Datuk Wong Khen Thau.

"I personally think that we need to know whether locals are prepared for more competition to come in, as many people from other parts of Malaysia will definitely be interested in working and starting businesses here," said the president of the Federation of Sabah Manufacturers (FSM).

He said he understands the work permit system was created to give some sort of protection to locals, and is

not only applied in Sabah but also in Sarawak.

"We should remember why the concept was started, and generally, the playing field is still not leveled between Sabahans and other parts of Malaysia in terms of training, skills, and other factors."

Wong said if the locals are ready and well prepared to accept the open policy, there is no reason for the idea to be contested.

"I believe that in the long run, the open policy would be very beneficial for Malaysia as a whole, especially with the introduction of 1Malaysia, the brainchild of our Prime Minister," he said.

Wong was asked to comment on the recent call by LDP deputy president Datuk Chin Su Phin for the

State Government to do away with the work permit requirement for Malaysians from Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia to work and do business in Sabah.

Previously, Chin said that Malaysians from Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak who have been staying in Sabah, either working or doing business for many years, are still subjected to work permit requirement.

However, there is no such requirement for Sabahans working in Peninsular Malaysia, he added.

The policy on the people from Peninsular and Sarawak must change in order to make the 1Malaysia concept a reality, Chin said when officiating at LDP Balung, Merotai and Sri Tanjung divisions' joint

annual general meeting.

"We propose that the Sabah State Government should grant Permanent Resident status to our fellow Malaysians from Sarawak and West Malaysia who have stayed and worked in Sabah for more than 10 years, provided they have good record and proper occupation," he said.

Chin said it is his hope that one day Malaysians from Sarawak and West Malaysia can stay and work in Sabah without having to apply for work permit.

"The truth is that due to their own political gains, politicians are the ones who are opposed to doing away with the Sabah's work permit requirement for Malaysians from other states in the country, not the people in general," he said.