

Make Sabah the 'Dubai' of Far East – FSM

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State has all ingredients to be the hub port in region

By Joe Leong

KOTA KINABALU: The federal government should seriously consider developing Sabah as the hub port for the Far East, very much like what Dubai is for the Middle East.

"Sabah has all the necessary ingredients as it is in the centre of this region, within five to six hours' flight to all major Asian capital cities," Datuk Seri Panglima Wong Khen Thau, president of Federation of Sabah Manufacturers (FSM), said here yesterday.

Such cities include Beijing up north, Sydney in the south, New Delhi, Tokyo and Seoul – all within five and six hours away by plane, he pointed out.

"The state is very central within the world's most populated region, with China, India and Indonesia being the largest countries in terms of population," he told The Borneo Post in an interview.

He said the Malaysian government should look seriously into this possibility, considering that 70 per cent of the country's imports are from China, Japan, Korea, India and other Asian countries that are in close proximity to Sabah.

"We here in Sabah are



Wong

neither to these countries. Why is it necessary for everything to go through Port Klang? You already have Singapore close by.

"Sabah should present a better challenge and alternative to Singapore than Port Klang or the port at Tanjung Pelepas in Johor.

Wong said this would be one of the means by which Sabah could make a quantum leap from the present per capita income of only about US\$3,000 to US\$4,000 to US\$15,000 per annum by 2020 when Malaysia is supposed to reach a developed nation status.

"In order for Sabah to make such a leap in its economic standing, what the federal government can help

is obviously to pump a lot of money to build up the infrastructure.

"This should include increase in economic activities such as the development of industries and promotion of revenue oriented sectors such as tourism, education and aquaculture."

He gave examples such as Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, France, the United States and Britain that have gained from such sectors, particularly in education that attracted students from overseas.

Wong, who is also KKIP Investors' Consultative Committee chairman, said another way the federal government could help Sabah narrow its economic gap with that of states in Peninsular Malaysia is to build a petro-chemical industry in the state.

"The government should have a flexible policy," he said, adding, "Let's not just talk about Sabah getting a higher percentage of oil royalty payment."

"Even if we were to get 20 per cent (compared with 5 per cent now), eventually, the funds would be exhausted.

"It would be more meaningful if the federal government thinks in terms of how to build up a petro-

chemical industry in Sabah."

Wong said Sabah must recall its experience with "the timber curse" and even the oil palm industry (that is having a boom time now) might face the same fate.

"We should not be concerned with just the petroleum money, but switch our thoughts to building a petro-chemical industry. The government should allocate money and develop this sector here."

Wong said this would be a long term development and economic solution for Sabah.

"We have enough gas for the state. This is more meaningful than asking for 20 or even 30 per cent of royalty for oil from Sabah. The money comes and goes.

"So, what we are talking about is rather bargaining for better industrial infrastructure, how Sabah could have a long term economic sustainability.

"Asking for higher quantum in oil royalty is not the answer. If it is not sustainable, it would be like Sabah's past bad experience, when (timber) wealth in hand is eventually gone," he said. He added that the same applies to the oil palm industry that appears to be very promising now.

"Let's be more visionary," he stressed.

Part of assembly ceiling collapses

PENANG: The Penang State Assembly is due to sit on Monday but suffered the misfortune of a portion of the ceiling in the sitting hall collapsing yesterday.

However, there were no casualties. Speaker Datuk Abdul Halim Hussain said approximately 70 per cent of the ceiling over the media and public galleries and where the Hansard writer sits came tumbling down at 3.30pm.

He said the Public Works Department had been asked to carry out a probe into the incident and inspect the safety of the premises.

Abdul Halim added that he was confident yesterday's incident would not affect Monday's sitting of the assembly and that the House had contingency plans in case it could not proceed as scheduled.

Checks by Bernama at the building found rectification

What it should have been

THE second paragraph of the front page report in 30 April 2010 issue of The Borneo Post, headlined 'Motorbike crash victim made road safety ambassador', should read:

The City Hall, which organises the state level road safety campaign from 23 April until yesterday, felt Fariz A. Rani can help spread the message about the need to exercise road

Third request for runway dead

• From p

When contacted, KLIA Con manager Mohd Fadhil Raml latest EOT is on May 19, and EOT application was made 1

"However, it is still on the whether or not it will be approved to disclose the period of exte

This would be the third request where the original timeline was April last year.

Meanwhile, Abdul Ra