

THE SUN

DATE: 30/01/2008

No group will be left out: Abdullah

The Sun - 30/1/2008

KOTA KINABALU: The Sabah Development Corridor is a definitive development project aimed at wiping out poverty by 2025, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

It is not an unrealistic programme as the government would ensure the SDC is successfully implemented and that benefits accrued to the rakyat from all walks of life, he said when officiating the SDC's action plan at the Teluk Sepangar container port, near here.

The SDC would stress the people's welfare, whereby no race or group would be left out of mainstream development, he said.

SDC is the fourth economic corridor to be launched after the Iskandar Development Region, Northern Corridor Economic Region and East Coast Economic Region.

Abdullah said the SDC's 18-year tenure starting this year would see the development of Sabah based on five main aspects, to transform the state into:

- a major entry point in the region for trade, investment and tourism;
- a harmonious and peaceful state regardless of race or religion;
- a technology-savvy state in all aspects of life which will ensure a higher quality of life;
- a rich state with job opportunities for all; and
- a comfortable state to reside in, with a high standard of living together with cultural diversity, heritage and environment.

"When we have successfully built up all the five aspects, we will witness a significant transformation. The implementation of the SDC

in the next 18 years would transform the image of the state," said Abdullah, adding that Sabah would develop rapidly, chalking up a four-fold increase in gross domestic product to RM63.2 billion in 2025 while the unemployment rate would also be reduced to 3.5%, from 5.8% in 2006.

Abdullah said SDC was planned to cover the entire state so that development projects benefited all.

"In the west coast, SDC would develop agro-food zones for small- and medium-scale enterprises, in the central zone an internal agropolitan zone, tourism zone and agriculture in the hilly areas and agro-forestry zone in the north.

"In the east coast region, an industrial zone, marine tourism, integrated agro-food zone, agro-biotechnology innovation zone and palm oil industry zone would be developed," he said.

To eradicate poverty, Abdullah said existing programmes through the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development would be expanded along with the agropolitan concept to ensure the poor in Sabah would be able to increase their income and improve self-sufficiency.

Entrepreneurial programmes, especially the "One Product One District" programme would be encouraged, he said.

Abdullah also announced the liberalisation of the aviation sector in Sabah to develop the state as a premier tourist destination where the government would facilitate application by airline companies to fly to Sabah. - Bernama