

**Sarawak Government Ensures Balance Between Development And Environmental Conservation - Minister Bernama
February 12, 2012**

LAWAS (Sarawak), Feb 12 (Bernama) - The Sarawak government always ensures that development and environmental conservation in the state are balanced, said State Resource Planning and Environment Minister II, Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan.

He said the government is fully aware that the state's virgin jungles and forests must be rehabilitated and preserved for the next generation to inherit.

"It is a challenge for the government but we have achieved this - our state is still covered with a forest that no other state or country can match," he said, noting that some Western countries had questioned the state's forestry policies.

The minister was opening a 77-metre suspension bridge linking 11 Penan villages in Sungai Adang, built at a cost of RM180,000.

The project, which took 35 days to complete, was jointly implemented by the Sarawak Forestry Department, International Tropical Timber Organisation and Syarikat Samling Timber Sdn Bhd.

State Forestry Department deputy director Sapuan Ahmad said he hoped that the bridge would benefit the local residents not only in crossing the river but also helping them to generate household income as they would be able to conveniently bring their agriculture and forest produce to the nearest towns.

"Besides, they would also be able to obtain food supplies from the camps, shops and, most importantly, their children can go to school without having to risk strong currents while crossing the river," he said. Presently, only about 30 per cent of Penan children go to school.

Meanwhile, Sungai Adang village chief Abau Nyagong, 60, while expressing appreciation to the government for the facility, extended the residents' request for a road to the villages, electricity and clean water supply.

Pastor Yahya Libang, 47, said the situation was worse before the construction of the suspension bridge because, during floods, they cannot carry out their daily activities because of the strong and risky river currents.

He said two lives have been lost in such incidents.

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