

## Sabah Ready to Face Hot Weather, Ensure Adequate Water Supply – Hajiji



Hajiji receiving a portrait of himself made up of a collage of more than 400 pictures of the TAR UMT students' activities from the students' representatives.

KOTA KINABALU (Feb 24): The Sabah government is always prepared to face the El Nino phenomenon or hot and dry weather, addressing any potential issues throughout the season, said Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor.

He said this includes managing water problems effectively and ensuring adequate water supply for residents in every area. "We face many water issues, around 60%. This is due to possible water theft and underground pipe leaks. The state government will address this issue," he told reporters after officiating the Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TAR UMT) branch in Sabah on Saturday.

Hajiji added that the state government was committed to resolving water supply issues plaguing the state this year, including upgrading and improving water treatment plants in all districts. "We have received assistance from the federal government amounting to RM300 million. We will use it to address Sabah's water problems. So, don't worry. We will do our best," he said.

On Friday, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad reportedly urged relevant departments and agencies to be ready to carry out large-scale fire suppression and cloud seeding operations to tackle hot, dry weather and the El Nino phenomenon.

Earlier in his speech, the Chief Minister said the opening of TAR UMT Sabah branch augurs well with the State Government's aspiration to develop a quality human capital pool in Sabah. Hajiji said he welcomed TAR UMT's initiative to expand its wings to Sabah, which directly assists with the development of the state's higher education.

"The opening of the TAR UMT Sabah creates opportunities and opens up choices for Sabahans to further their studies at the university level," he said. "I applaud TAR UMT's 'Beyond Education' philosophy which emphasises academic excellence, nurtures important competencies and develops civic values in its students. These are holistic developments that will empower students, especially the youths in Sabah not only to achieve their ambitions but to also contribute to the development of the State," he said.

Hajiji said education is the cornerstone of progress and development and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that children in Sabah receive the best education.

"This is why human capital is one of the three main thrusts of our development roadmap, the Hala Tuju Sabah Maju Jaya (SMJ). People are our greatest assets. By investing in education, training and skill development, we aim to prepare our population for future challenges and opportunities," he said.

The State Government had allocated RM475 million to strengthen human capital development this year, he said, adding that youths made up a substantial part of Sabah's population and the State Government remained focused on empowering the state's youths to reach their fullest potential to drive Sabah's future developments.

He said in line with Sabah's Youth Policy, the State had also allocated RM16.89 million to implement Sabah's Youth Leadership Development Programme this year which included voluntarism and social unity activities.

"We will continue to channel resources to implement various programmes for our youths, including leadership, skill, and entrepreneurial activities. "Youth development schemes such as the Sabah Youth Entrepreneurs Success Scheme (SYABAS) will continue to further support young entrepreneurs in starting and strengthening their entrepreneurial ventures," he said.

Hajiji said the State government had introduced various programmes and initiatives to support and equip youths, among them the Student Consultative Council (MPPS) comprising public and private higher learning institutions' student leaders from all over the country including universities, polytechnics, community and skills institutes as well as secondary schools.

"This is an important platform for young Sabahans to share their opinions and aspirations with us to ensure the success of the SMJ Development Plan. "It is a strategic platform for the youth in Sabah to be involved in the development of the State while studying and as such, we will continue to further strengthen this initiative to instil excellence in our future leaders," he said.

The Chief Minister said it was important too that quality tertiary education is available for the youths in Sabah. It was important that a substantial part of the student population in Sabah are into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education, he said.

"The state Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry has put in place the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan as a guide to implement various programmes and initiatives to empower the science, technology, innovation and economy (STIE) ecosystem in Sabah. "The plan targets at least 40 per cent of school students to be in science stream by 2025. With this target in place, it has become more important for Sabah to have quality tertiary education institutions to provide excellent STEM-related tertiary qualifications for students in Sabah," he added.

Hajiji said many incentives have been established to help alleviate Sabah students' financial burden such as the Sabah Outstanding Students Scholarship, Outstanding Rural Students Scholarship, public and private higher learning institution scholarships, and bursaries through Yayasan Sabah. "In 2022, the State collected RM55.7 million to establish the Sabah State Education Fund (TPNS) and as of December 2023, more than 2,800 students pursuing tertiary education in Sabah, Sarawak, Peninsular Malaysia and abroad have received financial assistance from TPNS.

"In addition, I am glad to know that within this group of recipients, 12 of them are students of TAR UMT," he said. "As we move forward, let us all work together to ensure that our youths remain competitive and capable of contributing to the success of the Sabah Maju Jaya aspirations and the nation as a whole," he said.