

Investment prospects bright despite economic downturn

By Frankie L. Labang

KUCHING - Sarawak is on target to become fully industrialised well ahead of the year 2005 on one condition - how fast it can overcome the present economic downturn.

Industrial Development Minister Datuk Abang Johari Tun Open said yesterday by the end of 1995, Sarawak had amassed RM 25 billion in foreign investments for the manufacturing sector but in order to become fully industrialised, the State would have to surpass the target of another RM14 billion.

Speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing ceremony on the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between University Malaysia Sarawak and Komag USA (M) Sdn here, the Minister said "it will allow Komag's manufacturing technicians (MTs) and equipment technicians (ETs) who work on shifts to participate in a continuing education programme.

"This is customized programme fulfilling the technical needs of Komag manufacturing process and shift pattern of MTs and ETs," he said.

Datuk Abang Johari also disclosed that the manufacturing sector was targeted to grow further at 20 percent per annum and would account for 20 percent of Sarawak's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by the year 2000.

"Sarawak has come a long way from the economic backwaters of the 60s to become one of the most progressive states in the country," he said. "Despite the economic downturn, the investment prospects in Sarawak are still bright."

The Minister pointed out that further expansion and diversification of the manufacturing sector had contributed to the accelerated industrialisation in the State. "In the past five years, Sarawak has established a strong manufacturing base in the high

technology electronic industry."

"With the existing stable of multinational companies such as Komag, Hadco, Taiyo Yuden, Toko Electronics, Wangimas and the new come 1st Silicon Malaysia, the Sama Jaya Free Industrial Zone is fast becoming the little Silicon Valley of Borneo Island," Datuk Abang Johari said.

"The government will continue to provide good physical infrastructure, training, research and development facilities to meet the needs of the industry."

He said young Sarawakians had been given opportunities to acquire new skills relevant to the needs of the high-tech industry.

"Training and R&D programmes cover all levels of workforce from the technician, supervisor, engineer, manager and top management."

Datuk Abang Johari was also pleased to learn that Unimas was in the process of preparing a new set of training programmes for the new wafer fab company to be based in the Sama Jaya Free Industrial Zone.

He congratulated the university and Komag for taking the initiative to develop this new programme - Certificate in Manufacturing Technology - to be offered to technicians of the electronic companies here.

"Hopefully in future, there would be more R&D work and technology transfer programmes involving the university and the industry in order to develop home-grown and indigenous technology."

Present at the MoU signing were Chairman of Unimas, Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Bujang Mohd Nor, Unimas vice-chancellor, Professor Dato' Dr Zawawi, Komag Incorporated USA chairman Datuk Dr Tu. Chen and Komag USA (M) Sdn managing director Encik Bill Wong.



PROVIDING QUALITY TRAINING ... Datuk Abang Johari shaking hands with Encik Bill Wong while Datuk Dr Chen (right) and Professor Dato' Dr Zawawi Ismail (left) and Tan Sri Haji Bujang Nor (2nd left) look on. PHOTOGRAPH: TH LU