

## Small towns to go the Scandinavian way

on 12 July 2012.

KUCHING: Sarawak will be shaping its development based on the network of towns in Scandinavian countries.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud felt this was the path the state should take to avoid falling victim to rapid urbanisation.

“Rapid urbanisation will only result in escalating cost of living and this will not be the quality of life the people want,” he said when opening an engineering conference here yesterday.



Towards sustainable development: Taib launching the conference as (from left) Unimas deputy vice-chancellor Professor Dr Peter Songan, engineering faculty dean Prof Dr Wan Hashim Wan Ibrahim, Khairuddin Abdul Hamid and conference chairperson Dr Delsye Teo look on. - ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE / THE STAR

He said Sarawak would follow a different model of development by not aspiring to have a big city but rather concentrate on having smaller towns throughout the state.

Taib said in Scandinavian countries, the towns maintained their heritage buildings as well as the surrounding nature so that people could enjoy a serene lifestyle.

He admitted that for a developing state to improve on its environmental record was not an easy feat.

However, he was pleased to note the state had succeeded in striking a good balance between development and sustaining the environment.

He said Sarawak was into its second phase of industrialisation and that too called for maintaining that balance.

In order to do this, he singled out soft soil engineering as a crucial component in this mission.

“We have more than two million hectares of soft soil land on which our existing towns are built on. This is because the people in Sarawak once depended highly on the rivers as their main mode of transport, so towns developed nearby rivers.”

As such, he said, soft soil engineering was needed in Sarawak’s development and hoped that more focus be given to this discipline.

Taib assured that Sarawak was giving keen interest to the protection of its environment, including in the development of the Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy.

Earlier, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Khairuddin Abdul Hamid said the event was a flagship conference of Unimas’ engineering faculty.

He said this year, the faculty and the Institution of Engineers Malaysia Sarawak Branch had put together a more comprehensive programme with a wide range of topics, papers and speakers.

“I do believe the theme ‘Engineering towards change — Empowering Green Solutions’ is timely and appropriate especially in the context of Sarawak.

“Therefore, in line with this theme, some of the key focus areas to be presented and discussed include sustainable building and structure systems, green transport systems, geotechnical and geo-environmental engineering, sustainable water, energy efficiency and advanced manufacturing technology for the future,” Khairuddin said.

The conference received more than 140 abstracts and papers from all over the world, including Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Greece, India, the United States and Taiwan.

Source : [thestar](#)