

Unimas confers honorary doctorate on Chief Minister

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KOTA SAMARAHAN: Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud was conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Development Studies by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) during its 16th convocation ceremony here yesterday.

The honorary degree, which was presented by Head of State Tun Datuk Patinggi Abang Muhammad Salahuddin, was to acknowledge the chief minister's contributions to the development of the state.

Taib, who is also Pro-Chancellor of Unimas, is the second prominent political figure in the country to be conferred this award by Unimas. The first recipient was former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 2004.

Describing the honorary degree as "meaningful", Taib shared his experiences and challenges faced in governing the state since 1981.

He said he was once "unpopular" among his comrades as they could not sync with his concepts and ideas to develop the state which lacked infrastructure, funds and ideology back then.

His signature concept, politics of development, was conceived early on because he believed it was the best vehicle to build and sustain development in the state over the long haul.

"In politics of development, we allow market forces to be the main vehicle to spur the local economy. We need to diversify our economy so that our talents would stay to help us develop the state," he said in his speech.



CONGRATULATIONS: Salahuddin (right) presents the honorary degree to Taib. — Photo by Tan Song Wei.

"It is also the politics of development that has united the people of Sarawak. A lot of benefits could be gained as long as the people work closely together rather than fight each other."

On education, he said, it was one of the main pillars of politics of development as he knew early on that education was the only tool that could bring the people out from the poverty trap.

The main idea behind the establishment of Unimas in 1992, he said, was to churn out more educated and skilled workforce to push the state forward.

Taib advised the younger generation, especially Unimas graduates, to embrace the life-long learning culture by grabbing all education opportunities that come their way.

"In this new era, it is vital for the younger generation to cope with challenges which I term

COME - Change, Opportunity, Mobility and Equality. You need to prepare yourselves for any change for your own good and that of the country," he said.

"You need to be brave and smart to grab all opportunities. Your mobility must be there when it comes to job as you have to work outside the office. This is the new reality when we move towards an industrial society."

On Unimas, Taib said the university had done a splendid job in producing graduates who not only excelled academically but could think rationally and critically.

Also present were Taib's wife Puan Sri Ragad Kurdi Taib, Unimas board of directors chairman Datu Dr Hatta Solhi, vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Khairuddin Ab Hamid and Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Alfred Jabu Numpang.