

CM calls for uniform M'sian landscape

Taib says common identity can come fast with more studies done on Sabah, Sarawak

By Zora Chan

KUCHING: Having more social studies done on Sabah and Sarawak will create a more accurate Malaysian identity, said Chief Minister Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud.

He said as of today, for lack of in depth studies done on the social structures and fabrics of the two eastern states, the situation is that the country has yet to paint a uniform landscape for the whole nation.

"After 50 years of independence and 45 years of Sarawak and Sabah achieving independence within Malaysia, the total landscape of Malaysia is not uniform although the feeling to be one is strong," he said.

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Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, Chief Minister of Sarawak

the social structure that was still embedded in old forces of politics while new economic forces had not brought a uniform structure, he said in his keynote address at the 6th International Malaysian Studies Conference (MSC6) here.

Taib, however, was quick to add that Malaysia was heading towards the right direction.

Nonetheless, he urged that more studies be done and within the immediate future, to hasten

understanding of Sabah and Sarawak politically, particularly regarding issues on the ground, bureaucracy and people's opinions.

He said it used to be that the federal government and heads of departments in Peninsular Malaysia found it hard to meet Sarawak's demands.

"In Sarawak, we want to do things differently from Peninsular Malaysia. We talk slightly different economic language to serve the people," he said.

Citing examples, he said 25 years ago those from the peninsula found it "queer" when the state government asked for more speed boats and these to be manned by two boatmen.

He said they could not understand Sarawak's reliance on river transportation particularly in the rural areas until he brought in an officer to experience travelling in the interior from Belaga to Kapit through the challenging rapids.

According to Taib, Sabah and Sarawak are the only states in the country that still engage the flying doctor service because it is impractical to build a hospital in each division.

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TOWARDS A FRUITFUL CONFERENCE: Taib hits a gong to launch the 6th International Malaysian Studies Conference as (from left) organising chairman and PSSM president Professor Datuk Dr Abdul Rahman Embong, Unimas vice chancellor Professor Dr Khairuddin Abdul Hamid and Unimas chairman Tan Sri Datuk Amar Bujang Mohd Nor look on. — Photo by Johnathan Bullet