

CM lauds move to set up Chair for Dayak Studies



SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION ... Datuk Patinggi Taib striking a traditional drum to launch the Chair for Dayak Studies. On the right is Tan Sri Datuk Amar Alfred Jabu. PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN CHAN

By Wilson Luke and Sharon Ling

KUCHING - Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud yesterday lauded the move by the Dayak leaders and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) to set up of the Chair for Dayak Studies in the university.

"This will help the Dayak community go through socio-economic transformation towards they enter the 21st Century," he said.

Speaking at the launching held at Unimas campus at Kota Samarahan, he said research was necessary to streamline effective methods in the struggle to attain balance development through proper channel.

"The research orientation in Unimas is also to be commended as it shows that the

university's goal is line with the government's effort to uplift any community," he said.

Datuk Patinggi Taib who is also the Pro-Chancellor for Unimas, believed that the programme could develop strategies and approach problem with professionalism which, he said, would be used to utilise the State's resources in the most effective manner.

"That level of approach will set a trend to ensure that we will seek knowledge that can contribute to national development," he said.

At the same time Datuk Patinggi Taib was proud to note that the Dayak leaders were able to take the initiative in an effort to discard old ineffective methods in

achieving economic prosperity for their people.

He regarded setting up of the Chair for Dayak Studies as the end of the hangover from post-colonial period, saying in the past, such struggles were mostly tainted with angry feelings.

"Now the new approach is considered concrete and systematic to strengthen the Dayak economically within the diverse communities of Sarawak," he said.

He believed the Dayak leaders had gone through a transformation as they had now discovered that the best way to help the country was to see that their own people were well-equipped to help themselves. "There is no other formula as effective as that."

Datuk Patinggi Taib felt that sufficient inter-action among the races had discarded the feelings of being left out of development.

"Now that there is sufficient interaction, nobody will find it a pleasure to dominate one another, far less put them at a disadvantage," he said.

Meanwhile, the assistance of RM1.2 million pledged by the Dayak Cultural Foundation and CMS yesterday, will be a boost for the study of a range of issues facing the Dayak people as they enter the new millennium.

The research will be used for the understanding of issues of employment creation and income distribution, particularly for those people residing in rural areas.

It will also touch on the

relations between the various Dayak people living in the coastal and urban areas and with new settlers from other regions.

The Chief Minister further emphasised that it was appropriate for the Chair of Dayak Studies to be located in a broader East Asian perspective, in the Institute of East Asian Studies (IEAS) so that the wealth of cultural vitality could be seen in the regional context.

"The State government also hope that the Chair is the first of several such ventures, and will be followed by the endowment of a Nusantara Chair and the Chair of Sino Bornean Studies."

The Chief Minister said the new millennium required educated citizens

with a full understanding not only of their particular discipline but also in a global and comparative perspective.

Research on Dayak Studies will be an important focus for IEAS at UNIMAS; by taking advantage of the university's strategic location, the IEAS encourages a deeper understanding of current and projected change in the regional and global socio-economic environment, with a particular concern for the study of Sarawak and Borneo-Kalimantan in general.

Its role is to promote a range of interdisciplinary programmes and activities to advance a clearer understanding of the East Asia which remains one of the most dynamic and challenging regions of the globe.