

We need the worms urgently, says YB

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KOTA KINABALU: Kundasang assemblyman Dr Joachim Gunsalan hopes that the relevant authorities could speed up their process to release the imported worms which could be used by highland farmers to fertilise their lands.

Dr Joachim said he was briefed by the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) scientist that the worms could be used to produce compost which in effect could help enrich the land and it is also environment friendly.

"However, we have a problem now because the worms cannot be promoted to the farmers as it is still under quarantine. But once the quarantine period is over, we hope the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry will get the co-operation from UMS to promote the worms to our farmers," he said.

Debating the State Budget 2007 at the State Legislative Assembly sitting yesterday, he

also congratulated the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry for successfully producing a new type of cloned peas, which has high resistance for diseases.

"The ministry has now transferred the technology or supply the seeds free of charge to the highland farmers for commercial planting purposes. This shows that our agriculture sector has a bright future as the research carried out has benefited our farmers," he said.

He also urged the Ministry of Youth and Sports to consider roping in the Mt Kinabalu International Climbathon Race as one of the programmes under the ministry and provide adequate fund to enable the local runners to train and compete with the foreign runners.

He noted that the local runners have finished in commendable positions in the open category of the strenuous race held annually in Kinabalu Park.

"Most of our local competitors are part time runners as compared to the foreigners are who professionals where they are properly trained and receive sponsorship," he said.

Touching on the Visit Malaysia Year 2007 where Sabah targeted to welcome 2.7 million tourist arrivals, he asked the State Government whether it can cope with the influx of tourist and have adequate accommodations especially in Kinabalu Park as well as a risk management plan to protect our fragile ecosystem.

"I urge more hotels to be built in areas that have high potential for tourists. And I also urge the relevant authorities to be proactive for development and will not create unnecessary delay to process the development plan or approval to build hotels," he said.

He warned that if we fail to reduce the rampant red tape and act slow, the potential investors from the private sec-

tors will get bored and they will go to other places.

He also asked what happened to the RM10 million that the State Tourism Ministry had applied with the Federal Tourism Ministry to rehabilitate the former Mamut copper mine where its environment situation in the area has worsened over the years.

"I was told there is a high possibility that an environmental disaster will happen if we did not act quickly now. When it rained the acid mine discharge in the open pit will overflow and furthermore the huge volume of water could cause the pit to crack and collapse," he warned.

On the development of IT aimed to reduce the digital gap, he hoped that the ministry concerned will carry out a study first to find out the impact and weakness of the existing centres before it wanted to introduce 20 more centres in the rural areas.