

Sabah, China deepen marine science partnership

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China’s research vessel Tan Kah Kee (RVTKK).

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah is strengthening international collaboration in marine science as part of its ambition to become Malaysia’s blue economy hub, with scientific research, innovation and strategic partnerships playing a key role in driving sustainable ocean-based development.

State Minister of Education, Science and Technology Datuk James Ratib said the State Government is committed to positioning Sabah as a leader in the blue economy under the Sabah Maju Jaya Development Plan.

“Achieving this vision requires more than policy alone. It requires strong scientific evidence, technological advancement, skilled human capital and strategic partnerships at both national and international levels,” His speech delivered by Assistant Minister Jordan Jude Ellron during the open day of China’s Research Vessel Tan Kah Kee (RVTKK) at Kota Kinabalu Port, on Thursday.

The RVTKK is an oceanographic research ship owned by Xiamen University. It is named after Tan Kah Kee, the overseas Chinese philanthropist who founded Xiamen University.

The Public Open Day aimed to strengthen strategic collaboration among government agencies, academic institutions, industry players and other stakeholders in advancing the blue economy through marine scientific research, capacity building, knowledge exchange and international cooperation.

James said Sabah, with more than 1,400 kilometres of coastline, rich marine biodiversity and abundant ocean resources possesses immense potential for sustainable economic growth through responsible ocean governance.

He said scientific research is crucial in supporting evidence-based policymaking and ensuring marine resources are managed sustainably for future generations.

“The advanced oceanographic research vessel, equipped with modern laboratories, deep-sea exploration equipment, autonomous observation technologies and mapping systems, provides an outstanding platform for multidisciplinary marine research.

“The knowledge generated from such research will support Sabah’s priorities in strengthening fisheries, enhancing food security, protecting marine ecosystems, developing marine biotechnology, promoting renewable ocean resources and expanding the marine economy,” he said.

Beyond the vessel’s public exhibition, James said the collaboration would continue through a scientific expedition involving two officers from the Sabah Fisheries Department, one academic staff member and nine students from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

He described their participation in the six-day voyage from Kota Kinabalu to Kuala Lumpur as a strategic investment in developing Sabah’s marine scientists, exposing them to international research standards and strengthening the State’s scientific capabilities.

The programme, valued at RM22,000 per participant and covering voyage operations, research training and onboard facilities, reflects the commitment of international partners to nurture future marine researchers and encourage technology transfer and innovation.