

GENERAL

Hajiji Urges Stronger Sabah-US Ties For Sustainable Growth

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Kota kinabalu: Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor has called for cooperation between Sabah and the United States (US) to be further strengthened through strategic partnerships based on mutual respect and shared interests.

According to BERNAMA News Agency, Hajiji emphasised that bilateral ties between Sabah and the US extended far beyond government-to-government relations, encompassing students, entrepreneurs, researchers, conservationists, and local communities working together.

"By building partnerships based on sustainability, opportunity, and mutual respect, Sabah and the United States can contribute to a more prosperous and secure future. Let us use this moment to deepen our cooperation, turn ideas into action, and transform opportunities into lasting success," he said here tonight.

Hajiji's speech was delivered by Deputy Chief Minister II Datuk Seri Masidi Manjun and made available to Bernama, in conjunction with the Freedom 250 reception held here tonight, in celebration of the 250th independence anniversary of the US. Also present were US Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Catherine Dillon, and US Embassy in Malaysia Chargé d'Affaires David H Gamble Jr.

Hajiji noted that as part of Malaysia, Sabah's direct engagement with the US took place within the broader Malaysia-US strategic partnership, generating opportunities across key areas such as trade, education, environmental conservation, tourism, innovation, and maritime security.

Positioned strategically at the heart of Southeast Asia, he said Sabah offered significant potential for sustainable economic growth across sectors, including renewable energy, agriculture, manufacturing, digital innovation, logistics, and the blue economy. The Chief Minister invited investors to capitalise on high-value agriculture, downstream processing, ecotourism, clean energy, and digital services, reassuring that the state government remained dedicated to upgrading connectivity and streamlining procedures to help businesses thrive with confidence.

Tracing the history of bilateral ties back to 1865, Hajiji highlighted that US engagement in the region began nearly a century before the formation of Malaysia, when former US Consul to Brunei Claude Lee Moses secured land rights near the Kimanis River to establish the "Ellena" agricultural settlement.

"Key historical milestones include the 1899 port call by the aircraft carrier USS Bennington in Sandakan, early oil exploration by US firms in 1912, and scientific expeditions led by US botanists in 1914 and documentary filmmakers Osa and Martin Johnson in 1920," he added.

Hajiji concluded that enduring exchange programmes like the Peace Corps, Fulbright teachers, and the American Corner at Universiti Malaysia Sabah, combined with investments from major US corporations such as ConocoPhillips, McDermott, and Baker Hughes, continued to support local employment, education, and community development. "In security and conservation, joint initiatives such as the Pacific Partnership exercises and conservation projects at Tun Mustapha Park, Danum Valley, and the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre remain vital to keeping Sabah's waters safe and protecting its unique natural heritage," he said.