

Hajiji urges stronger Sabah-US ties for sustainable growth

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Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor has called for stronger Sabah-US ties through strategic partnerships focused on sustainable growth, trade, education, conservation and investment. – NSTP pic

KOTA KINABALU: Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor has called for stronger Sabah-United States cooperation through strategic partnerships based on mutual respect and shared interests.

Hajiji said ties between Sabah and the US extended beyond government-to-government relations, encompassing students, entrepreneurs, researchers, conservationists and local communities.

"By building partnerships based on sustainability, opportunity, and mutual respect, Sabah and the US 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.

His speech was delivered by Deputy Chief Minister II Datuk Seri Masidi Manjun at the Freedom 250 reception here tonight, held to mark the 250th anniversary of US independence.

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 said Sabah's engagement with the US, as part of Malaysia, took place within the broader Malaysia-US strategic partnership, creating opportunities in trade, education, environmental conservation, tourism, innovation and maritime security.

He said Sabah's strategic location in Southeast Asia offered significant potential for sustainable growth in renewable energy, agriculture, manufacturing, digital innovation, logistics and the blue economy.

Hajiji also invited investors to explore opportunities in high-value agriculture, downstream processing, ecotourism, clean energy and digital services, while assuring that the state government remained committed to improving connectivity and streamlining procedures.

Tracing Sabah-US ties to 1865, he said 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 said.

Hajiji said enduring exchange programmes, including the Peace Corps, Fulbright teachers and the American Corner at Universiti Malaysia Sabah, together with investments by US companies 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.