

More varsities will brighten future

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By Mariah Doksil

KOTA KINABALU: It will be a brighter future for Sabah in many aspects if more higher learning institutions are set up in the state.

An academican with Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Sylvia A. Maratim, said higher education is a passport to a better life, and added that the quota system introduced in public universities under the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the 70s, and the rapidly increasing fees in private institutions, had affected the development of education in Malaysia.

"Many Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) and Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM) leavers are very keen to enter public matriculation and universities but the quota is limited. Meanwhile, the fees



Sylvia

to enter private institutions are always expensive."

Sylvia noted that setting up higher learning institutions must be well-planned, offering courses with existing materials, tools

and resources to have win-win products at the end.

"In Sabah, setting up another public higher education will also create healthy competition among the other public universities to improve their achievement."

Sylvia said the Education Ministry should look into supply and demand to ensure that graduates are able to find jobs after graduating from universities.

In order to attract more foreign students to Sabah, Sylvia said tourism and environment courses would be good investments for the state to find new ways to increase tourist arrivals.

"With the amazing biodiversity, landscape and culture, Sabah is one of the world's most fascinating destinations. We have lowland rainforests, mangroves, mountains, beaches and reefs,

making the state one of the most complex ecosystems and treasures to explore.

"That is one of the main criteria we can convert into education and sell it to the world. However, setting up higher learning institutions with quality services should also give opportunities to the locals.

"We need primary and secondary schools in the state to be upgraded so that they will meet the criteria to enter universities," she said.

Looking at the oil and gas sector, Sylvia said the Petronas-run Kimanis Petroleum Training Centre recently took in its second batch of trainees.

"The development in Kimanis will also change Papar into a new oil town similar to Miri, Bintulu and Kerteh, and can offer

Sabahans career opportunities."

With the career opportunities, the Ministry of Education should look into worker supply, she said, adding that the political stability in Sabah is another factor that makes the state a conducive environment for learning.

With the nine per cent increase in student intake in UMS recently, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman was asked whether there was a need to set up another public higher learning institution in Sabah.

Musa said he welcomed any proposal on the issue, adding the state government was ready to study the possibility of setting up another public higher learning institution in Sabah to meet the increase in applications to enter public university from local and foreign students.