



Masidi (left) handing over a certificate of appreciation to one UMS lecturer as Datuk KY Mustapha looks on.

Tourism is only sector controlled by locals: Masidi

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KOTA KINABALU: State Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Masidi Manjun said the irony in Sabah is that it could support a huge foreign labour presence, leaving many locals jobless, thus being labelled the poorest State.

Given the existence of over 300,000 foreigners in the local economy, with 200,000 in the plantation industry and rest in the manufacturing sector, the State could not really be deemed poor, he pointed out.

Currently, he said, the only sector that is controlled by locals is tourism, while foreign labour is the mainstay of the plantation and manufacturing sectors.

"Maybe it is our (the Bumiputeras) attitude that likes to complain. This is the root of the problem. This is from our own attitude," he said during the graduation dinner of Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) External Centre and UMS Link Centre for Professional Development (UCPD), here, Sunday.

"I wish to say this, especially for our Bumiputera graduates. Rarely, do we hear the Chinese graduates complaining about there being no job.

He recalled his poor student days where he had to work as a labourer, with only RM5 pay per day and having pocket money "not enough to reload (for making calls) the handphone of today's young."

"I wasn't ashamed of the work. And I thought this was the only way to survive," he added.

Masidi said graduates need to erase the attitude and begin to start generating their own income by making themselves employable and measure themselves to the Chinese who have the culture of "it is pride to see how much one can contribute to the family."

He said graduates need to shrug off the mentality of "what's the use of studying so hard in the university for years but end up working in the plantation sector."

The graduates need to know the sector is offering lucrative benefits such as free quarters, food, a salary of RM1,500, all of which are currently taken up by foreigners.

"Are we truly dependent on foreign labour? I just want to provoke our thoughts, is it true our economy is developing through the use of foreigners?"

"Believe me, one day the whole situation will be reversed and locals will become workers for the foreigners in their own State. We cannot allow this to happen for the future of our children," said Masidi, adding that Kalimantan, which is also developing its oil palm industry, will thus see a major exodus of current foreign labour.

"If this happens the State will experience an economic collapse," he added.

Earlier in his speech, Masidi felt graduates need to establish the value of their qualifications - after spending years to earn it, whether it would guarantee them jobs, for the real challenges were only beginning.

And, graduates really need to have the ability to market themselves as some may think having a valid qualification would guarantee employment, he added.

"We really have to weigh our options, whether upon graduating it could guarantee work. We need to learn and understand things on realities. This is our problem as thousands are without jobs or seemingly without work," he said.

He also pointed out that currently the only sector that is controlled by locals is tourism, while foreign labours are in control of the plantation and the manufacturing sectors.