

Right move by ex-leaders

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KOTA KINABALU: Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said Sabah's former leaders made the right choice to include Sabah in the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. He described the leaders at that time as being very far-sighted.

"They looked at unity, security and development as being very important to Sabah," he said during a visit to Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Tuesday.

Sabah after gaining its independence on Aug. 31, 1963, he said, was faced with a lot of problems, including poverty and lack of infrastructure such as roads.

But moving on, Sabah has improved a lot with 8.6 per cent average growth rate in 2009.

"That is a big achievement whereas in Indonesia, even one per cent is hard to achieve.

"But in Sabah...enteng saja (it's normal)," he said.

Under the Tenth Malaysia Plan, the Federal Government has given RM12.2 billion to carry out various development programmes such as rural infrastructure and housing.

While prices of goods, transport, houses and rent, among others in Sabah have risen significantly, he said, other government programmes mitigated these.

And the 2.8 per cent rate of inflation in Malaysia, he said, is among the lowest in the world. The rate of inflation in some African nations even reached 100 per cent.

In certain countries, its citizens carry bundles of cash just to purchase a loaf of bread.

Because of the situation in Malaysia, foreigners are flocking to come here.

Many, about one million,



Muhyiddin addressing the UMS students.

entered the country illegally, he said, and all because they consider Malaysia as "heaven".

Malaysia, Muhyiddin said, even had to bring in foreigners to work in its plantations and factories because the people mostly want to be employed in an environment where there is air-conditioning.

"This means Malaysia has a lot of opportunities".

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak recently said there would be three million new job vacancies available soon.

To this, he said there would not be unemployment among Malaysians if only they are not choosy.

In Sabah, he said, the government has constructed 1,270km of new roads as well as upgraded roads since 2010.

"There is also a plan to construct the Trans Borneo Highway that links Sabah to Brunei and Sarawak. Since 2010 also, he said, more than 41,000 houses in Sabah were equipped with electricity.

"A total of 97,568 houses in rural areas were connected with water since 2010, in addition to the existing ones," he said. When Malaya achieved its independence in 1957, he said, the nation's average income was USD320. Malaysia's average income now is USD9,700 and the target now is to achieve USD15,000 by 2020.

Some economists, he said, predicted that Malaysia could achieve the target before 2020.

To this, he urged the students to protect peace in the country and to respect one another.

He said the situation has remained intact because of the Barisan Nasional (BN).

Investors, he said, are confident with Malaysia and this is ascertained through the Confidence Index in 2010 in which the country was ranked 21st worldwide and improved to tenth last year.

Competitiveness wise, he said, Malaysia ranked 14th last year, an improvement from 16th place in 2011.

"Malaysia is only a small country with about 28 million in population but we beat Japan, Australia, UK and other countries in many factors," he said.

To this end, he said, Malaysia depends on the students now to ensure that its success is preserved and continued to a higher level.