

Inclusive initiatives to bridge Sabah-Peninsula development gap

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KOTA KINABALU: The various initiatives outlined under the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP) are seen to be able to bridge the development and economic gap between Sabah and the peninsula.

A senior lecturer at the Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Dr Rafiq Idris said the 12MP tabled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob clearly showed the federal government's commitment to the effort.

He said this was evident with at least 50 per cent of the total federal basic development allocation to be distributed to the less developed states, including Sabah, in the 12MP.

"If the plans and efforts can be translated in the next five years, the economic development gap will be reduced," he told Bernama.

The Associate Fellow at the Ungku Aziz Centre for Development Studies said efforts to bridge the economic gap could also indirectly reduce the poverty rate in the long run.

"With the allocation (in the 12MP), it will enable implementation of basic infrastructure, digitization, education, healthcare services as well as other basic needs for the state's development," he added.

However, in the effort to achieve economic growth, especially to reduce poverty, he said, it also

depends on various factors that are interdependent with each other, as well as requires long-term and continuous efforts.

"The factors include existing policies, efficient implementation of planning and awareness to improve the level of education in the society," he said.

Meanwhile, UMS vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Taufiq Yap Yun Hin said the efforts by Malaysia to introduce a more flexible higher education, digital education plans and job creation strategies through the 12MP were seen as capable of producing more high quality human capital.

He said the move was important in the effort by public universities and educational

institutions to produce more graduates who met the needs of the industry and avoid a mismatch between academic qualifications and employment opportunities.

"To face this challenge, universities need to have strategies to develop students' critical skills, especially involving digital, 'cognitive capabilities', as well as their social and emotional skills.

"I believe universities are able to be proactive, creative and adaptive in reviewing their academic curricula from time to time to meet the needs of the industry and in turn produce better human capital for the country," he added. — Bernama