

Expert: Relocation of airport example of on-off planning

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By: David Thien

Kota Kinabalu: Sabahans suffered from confusion because with every change of State Government, development plans also got changed or sidelined.

An example is the replacement airport for the Kota Kinabalu International Airport (KKIA), one of the subjects discussed at the NGO Sabar – Kopitiam Council “Sabah Voices to Action” podcast, recently.

It was hosted by talk show stars Adi and Haffisz on “Sabah’s infrastructure and Housing Challenges: No end in sight. What is holding back progress?” Chartered property surveyor Sr. Raja Sundra Lingam @ Sunny Kelvin and engineer Ir. Lo Chong Chiun were guests.

Raja said local plans or structural plans are mostly in draft forms, that means nothing is fixed, there is no certainty. “Tomorrow, the planning authorities can change the plans, if they want to.”

Lo said the local plans or structural plans are not gazetted.

Raja questioned building or relocating to a new airport in Kimanis which has no good infrastructure linkage to the new airport like travelling to KLIA.

“People will have to travel three to four hours, and those from Kudat may have to sleep overnight, incurring more expenses.

“Fast rail or high speed rail would be needed,” said Raja, adding that in his mind the location is not that suitable although it is very flat in the Kampung Madahan area. He said it is also very close to the SOGT which is a fire risk hazard area.

“KKIA is still able to cater to the airport passenger numbers. So now they have got their act together and said that they will expand KKIA with more money to cater to the rising passenger volume,” Raja said.

He noted that in the past, every State government mulled relocating or building a new airport in Sikuati, Kudat, Kota Belud or Tuaran, besides the Kimanis, with interested parties lobbying for the project.

Raja spoke about the proposed Private Funding Initiative for railway which is great for tourism but has yet to be realised for public transportation.

The PBS government wanted to build a railway connection to the Kota Kinabalu Industrial Park (KKIP) and the previous State government wanted to build a railway to Kudat with a new international port.

Now there is a proposal for a Pan-Borneo railway when the Pan-Borneo Highway can only be fully completed by 2029. There was even a proposed sky train for the State capital by a politician in the past.

Lo spoke on the challenging problems of land acquisition for projects in Sabah.

“If the land is not readily available, then the project just cannot kick off. Then there is the budget issue.

“The weak Land Acquisition Ordinance needs to be updated to be more equitable in public interests as the current compensation matter has to be at arm’s length deal so this is very outdated. We need to update the law to benefit more people from easier land acquisition.”

He cited the example of building a dam for water supply which until today has not started after changes in government. There was then the proposed Kaiduan Dam and now the Papar Dam still in the pipeline.

“Actually there was a plan to have a Bus Rapid Transportation (BRT) system during the late Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi’s time which was a long time ago,” said Lo.

“It was allocated RM1 billion but somehow it was not spent, we don’t know why. So, in terms of public transportation, we are actually very, very far behind.”

Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) is a high-quality public transportation system designed to provide faster and more efficient bus services in cities. It operates on dedicated lanes, has fewer stops, and uses modern buses to improve speed and reliability.

It was even reported that a GLC, Warisan Harta, now known as Qhazanah Sabah Berhad was looking into electric buses, and went to visit a factory in China for the purpose.

Warisan Harta was also given the mandate to exploit Sabah’s hydropower potential but did not develop anything substantial then.

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"Sabah Voices to Action - Shaping Sabah's Future Together" is a citizen-driven, non-partisan initiative running from March to June 2025, dedicated to amplifying Sabahans' voices, fostering meaningful discussions, and shaping policies on education, healthcare, public infrastructure, and good governance.

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Together, we can build a stronger, more inclusive Sabah!

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'Tram servicing Putatan, Kepyau and KK can boost tourism'

BOTH speakers were not sure why the railway line that used to link Melalap, Tenom to the Jesselton Wharf was dismantled. But they opined that it would have been an advantage to have a tram like in Hong Kong and in Australia, running up and down from Putatan, Kepyau to Kota Kinabalu, a boost to tourists' interest. Other than Hong Kong, according to Lo, only freight trains are profitable.

Lo said Sabah's train service is not reliable. If it is reliable, people would use it, although the State government would have to subsidise commuter train services as a service to the community and currently most goods are transported by lorries.

"Commuter trains do not make profit," Lo said, noting past incidents of derailment, landslides that blocked the Tenom-Besud rail route, with many villages using their own makeshift trolley transport system on the railway.

He said the logistics - good and efficient ports, good road networks, rail, warehousing are very important to industrial development.

The Ministry of Industry has announced three industrial parks, and the management wanted to control the development with their own power and water supply. Those utility authorities who only want to protect their own turf and the State government would have to cooperate and make these developments a success.

It was not known how many more feasibility studies have to be done for building the Labuan bridge, if linked with a high speed train, the Labuan International Airport can be used as another airport to serve Sabah.

Raja also talked on the need for urban regeneration as the next trend "as many buildings are actually getting older and coming to the end of their lifespan."

He cited his experience in managing older buildings and the case of the Sandakan shopping complex in the state capital, ideal for a commercial hotel redevelopment zone area.

Raja opined that the Land Subsidiary Title Enactment is an archaic law that needs to be updated to bring the mutual consent voting threshold down from 50 per cent for endorsing redevelopment of old buildings.

"We are not using West Malaysia's Strata Management Act or the Urban Renewal Act in Sabah," he said.

He urged that lands should be provided by the State government or its agencies for social housing schemes, rather than depending on developers to provide affordable housing.

Both speakers emphasised the importance of having comprehensive information on the resource potential in all the state's land areas and gazetted local and structural plans with building information modelling data, digital maps, geospatial data, utility mapping for newer development, to be ready for development opportunities, other than funding.

With coordinated data integrated and updated information will boost proper and better development.

This will save a lot of costs in the long run for responsible and effective State planning which is very important for Sabah's development.



From left: Adi, Ir. Lo, Sr. Raja Sunny and Harifuz.

The parking space at KKIA being utilised by visitors

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Youths urged to check voter registration status

Irwaty Mellisa

KOTA KINABALU: Youths aged 18 and above are urged to check their voter registration status in preparation for the 17th Sabah State Election (PRN), expected to take place this year.

This call was made by Yubidi Gompoy, Political Secretary to the Deputy Chief Minister cum Minister of Local Government and Housing, who emphasised the importance of this action to ensure strong support for Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS).

He said a bigger win for GRS would guarantee the continuity of development across Sabah, including in Sandakan.

"Political viability is crucial to ensure sustainable development for the people."

He made the statement while representing Dr Joachim Gonsalves at the launch of the Healthy and Safe Community Programme held in Kampung Pinauwantai, recently.

The programme brought together local residents and nearby communities in an effort to raise awareness on health and safety matters.

It was organised by the Kampung Pinauwantai Residents Association in collaboration with the Village Development and Security Committee (JKKK) of Panawantai.

According to Yubidi, such programmes



are highly significant as they not only increase public knowledge on health and safety issues but also strengthen the bonds among community members.

He also expressed appreciation to government agencies such as the Ranau Health Department, Ranau Fire and Rescue Department and the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) Ranau for their cooperation and valuable contributions through talks and demonstrations.

The programme featured free health screenings and talks on disease prevention, fire safety and personal and community safety practices.

Yubidi added that similar programmes should be held regularly, with the addition

of activities such as mental health awareness workshops and initiatives to address social issues.

"Make full use of opportunities like this and strive to make your village a model of a healthy and safe community," he added.

The organisers expressed their gratitude to the Kudat State Assembly Office for contributing food baskets which were distributed to those in need.

They appealed for funding support to continue organising community programmes in the future.

Yubidi thanked the organisers for the invitation to officiate the programme and reaffirmed his commitment to supporting local community initiatives.

S'kan city status must involve life quality: MP

Winnie Kasmir

SANDAKAN: The transformation towards city status must be grounded in the principle of "People First", where development is not merely measured by tall buildings, but also by the quality of life, education, social mobility and economic justice enjoyed by all segments of society.

Libaran Member of Parliament Datuk Suhaimi Nasir (pic) said in expressing his full support for the announcement made by the Sabah Local Government and Housing Ministry together with the Sandakan Municipal Council (MPS) in their effort to designate Sandakan as Sabah's second city, after Kota Kinabalu.

"This is a strategic and forward-thinking step that not only aligns with the State's holistic development framework but also reflects the Government's commitment to strengthening balanced development between the west and east coast regions of Sabah."

"As the MP for a constituency closely connected to Sandakan, I welcome this initiative as it carries great significance for the people in terms of economic, social and overall wellbeing," he said in a statement.